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DEVOTIONAL READINGS

FOR

FAMILY PRAYER

DEVOTIONAL READINGS

FOR

FAMILY PRAYER

FOR EVERY DAY IN

THE COURSE OF THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

WITH A FORM OF

Responsive Prayers for One Week

BY THE REV. J. J. DILLON, M.A.
RECTOR OF AGHADE, IN THE DIOCESE OF LEIGHLIN

Evening

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PREFACE.

NO apology is necessary in introducing this work to the notice of the public. Though the list of "Family Prayers" is indeed long, yet the following work differs considerably from any hitherto published.

The Prayer Book is of course the model of worship for all faithful members of the Anglican branch of the Holy Catholic Church. This work has been framed on that model. The scriptural portions have been chosen from the Daily Lessons as appointed in the Lectionary. If the master of the house so desires, he may read the whole Lesson or such portion as he may think most suited to the wants of his household, instead of confining himself to the brief passage which stands at the head of each page.

A short comment on this passage follows. It has often been felt that to read a chapter of the Bible simply without one word of explanation, and without an effort to bring home its teaching to the heart, is, where there are many children and servants, of little avail.

"HE THAT WOULD BE DEVOUT MUST BEWARE OF INDULGING A HABIT OF WANDERING IN PRAYER. IT IS A CRIME THAT WILL GROW UPON US, AND WILL DEPRIVE US OF THE BLESSINGS WE PRAY FOR."

The First Sunday in Advent.

(EVENING.)

OWE no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law. And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.—Romans xiii. 8, 10—14.

THE Advent Season speaks to us of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. His coming is an event which must happen to each of us. We know not when it may happen; but the very uncertainty should make us only more anxious to be ready when He does come. The Epistle for to-day tells us how we may prepare. As we listen to it, we feel that God is speaking to us, that He is calling us. God indeed calls us in various ways. He calls us by the voice of conscience; He calls us by His written Word; He calls us by the events we see taking place around us. What is it He bids us do? To wake out of sleep; to take a deeper interest in eternal things; to lay aside all works of darkness, and to put on the armour of light. The day has dawned, the day-star has arisen, and we have been brought into its bright light. We should walk as children of the light, honestly; not in revellings, nor in strife, nor in envying and jealousy. We have much to contend against; our enemies are numerous and strong; but God provides us with tried armour, in which we shall be able to stand in the day of battle. Clothed in this armour we must conquer. Each conquest will weaken the enemy, and strengthen us. When Christ comes again, He will give the inheritance to those who have fought and conquered in His righteous cause.

THE Lord is not slack concerning His promise; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?—2 St. Peter iii. 9–11.

TWO reasons are here given why the Lord delays His coming. First, to prove us, to try our faith. In many places and in varied ways the Lord prophesies of His coming. He will come to draw the net to shore. He will come to separate between the tares and the wheat; between the silver and the dross; between the good and the bad. He will come to give the labourers in the vineyard the wages for which He hired them. But He delays His coming to try, to prove our faith. If our faith be strong, we shall never doubt His word; but believe that whatever He says, He will also bring to pass. Again, He delays His coming that the depth of His love may be manifest. God wills that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. Therefore He delays His coming, not willing that any should perish. Oh, the heights and depths of that love which longs for all men to come to repentance! And yet we are warned that mockers will come in the last days, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" Their own wicked lives suggest the thought; for, walking after their own lusts, they dread to think of His coming, they fear to stand before His judgment seat. But all things must, notwithstanding the delay, be dissolved: what manner of persons therefore ought we to be? We ought to be ready, living in all holy conversation; and we ought to do what we can to hasten the time of His coming by helping to make known His Word, by praying earnestly for the number of God's elect to be completed, that His Kingdom may come, that "we, with all those who are gone before, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in His eternal and everlasting glory."

BEHOLD, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown. Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new Name. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.—Revelation iii. 11—13.

THERE is a crown laid up for all those who love their Lord's appearing, and who hold fast to the end that which they possess as gifts from God. Are we holding fast that which we have? We have the holy doctrines of the Church, the "faith once delivered unto the saints." Do we hold fast by these doctrines? and are we being built up in our most holy faith? We have the holy examples of those who have gone before us, and who conquered in the fight. Are we "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises?" We have Christ Himself, Who "has left us an example that we should follow in His steps." Is the same "mind in us which was also in Him?" The Master saith, "Behold, I come quickly." We know not when He may return. To those who are not watching, He will come as a thief in the night. At an hour when we think not, the Son of man will come. While we have time, let us "hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches." Let us be always ready, always holding fast that which we have; so that, having overcome here, we may at His appearing be made "pillars in the temple of God." Are we living as those who wait for their Lord? What should be our portion were He to come now? Oh, that those who are not ready would wake up out of their sleep, and rouse themselves from their carelessness! Every moment brings fresh danger to those who as yet are not prepared. For ourselves, let us wait and watch for the Master with our house within adorned with merits, and instructed in virtue.

JOHN to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from Him Which is, and Which was, and Which is to come; and from the seven Spirits Which are before His throne; and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him.—Revelation i. 4—7.

IF we would know whether we are really prepared for the Second Advent of Christ, we should ask ourselves whether Christ be all in all to us. Is He our "Alpha and Omega," the first and last, the beginning and the ending? If not, then He is nothing to us. He must be either all in all, or nothing. If He is, then old things have passed away, all things have become new. If the "faithful Witness," the "first begotten of the dead," be our Prince, we may, trusting in His wisdom, power, and love, see the progress of events without dismay, and behold calmly that which causes the hearts of men to fail them for fear. If He be not our Prince and Leader, we walk in darkness and have not the light. Others may think us wise,—we may think so ourselves,—but how is it in the sight of God? How will it be when the righteous Judge shall come with clouds, and "all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him?" If we acknowledge Him now as our "Alpha and Omega," we may rejoice with "joy unspeakable and full of glory;" for the day of darkness is passed, and the day-star has arisen in our hearts. Would that we knew more of Him! Would that we were more like Him! Let us seek to be less absorbed in the little concerns of life, and more given to prayer and communion with God. Let there be more sincerity and reality in our religion; more of the spirit of self-sacrifice: that so we may be prepared to meet our Lord, Who now is willing to be our Saviour, but then will be our Judge.

I JOHN, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ. I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, Saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last. And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; and in the midst of the seven candlesticks One like unto the Son of man.—Revelation i. 9—13.

ST. JOHN says here that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's day." It was when he was "in the Spirit" that he "saw the Son of man." If we would know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, we too must be "in the Spirit," that is, we must be spiritually minded. The world has great power over us. Though we know it to be transitory; though we know that alike its joys and sorrows shall soon pass away, yet has it a strong hold on every man. The cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, tend to choke and render the Word unfruitful. Too little self-denial, too little prayer, too little communion with God, beget a torpid frame of mind that knows, and sees, and feels, and cares little for the subject which St. John tells us ought to be the beginning and ending of our meditations. To take a deep interest in Christ and His religion we must be "in the Spirit," for it is only then we can really know that the things around us in which we are so immersed are but the passing creatures of a day, and that the things which are seen and known in the Spirit, alone are the true realities. If, then, we would know the truth, and form a just estimate of things around us and things above us, we must look up to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. We must confide ourselves to Him alone; live and walk in His Spirit: and then, when the day shall come for us to exchange this time of grace for the eternity of glory, we shall rejoice evermore in His presence, and delight ourselves in His service.

BELOVED, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified.—1 St. Peter iv. 12—14.

THE early Christians looked forward with joy and rejoicing to the second coming of the Lord. They knew that then they would be compensated for all the fiery trials with which they were tried in this present life. Even in the midst of sufferings they could rejoice, because they were thus made "partakers of Christ's sufferings," and they felt that their "light affliction" would "work out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If we would rejoice in this present life, and be glad with exceeding joy at Christ's appearing, we must be true followers of Christ. Let us try to picture to ourselves how different the world would be if every one was a Christian in deed and in heart, and not in name only. If we constantly kept before our mind the perfect ideal both in precept and example which the life of Jesus Christ supplies; if we strove to live in constant communion with our Saviour; if we were armed against the fiery trials and sufferings of life by faith in His love and hope in His promises; if we lived in the full assurance that the "Spirit of glory and of God rested upon us," how different would the world be. Then in truth would it be "turned upside down." Well for us if our lives correspond in all things with our profession; well for us if we be Christians in deed, if we glorify God in our words and works, if love be the guiding principle of our lives. We should strive to conquer all evil within and without us; then righteousness and peace will follow us all the days of our life, and when Christ's glory shall be revealed, we shall be "glad with exceeding joy."

The First Saturday in Advent.—Evening.

LABOUR not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for Him hath God the Father sealed. Then said they unto Him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him Whom He hath sent.—St. John vi. 27—29.

THE Advent Season speaks to us of preparation. We can only prepare for the second coming of the Lord in glory by "believing on Him Whom God hath sent." Christ Himself has taught us that this means much more than simply acknowledging in a "form of sound words" our faith in Christ. It means absolute submission of ourselves to God. This the Christ demands from all His true disciples, not that He may lay upon them any grievous yoke, but that He may cause their spiritual nature to advance and grow. When we submit ourselves to Christ, He will lead us not by force or tyrannous constraint, but with the full harmony and accord of our best thoughts and highest convictions till we reach the measure of the perfect man. This believing on Him Whom God hath sent, is a life-long work,—a work commenced when the soul yields itself in absolute submission to Christ, and continued on in ceaseless development and ceaseless growth while we are in this state of being. The work of our sanctification is not a mere momentary act of enthusiasm which leaves nothing more to be done; neither can it be completed in a moment. It involves a continuous, a life-long withdrawal of our affections from the evil of this world. It involves a life of prayer and communion with God. It involves a daily beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord as it is manifested in Jesus Christ while we are being changed into that same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. Thus our whole life is a time of preparation. As the Advent season is a time of preparation for the great Christmas festival, so our life here is a time of preparation for the eternal feast which God will provide when His Son comes a second time in great glory.

The Second Sunday in Advent.

NOW I say that Jesus Christ was a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers: and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to Thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto Thy Name. And again He saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles; and laud Him, all ye people.—Romans xv. 8—11.

THE Jews glorify God for His truthfulness, because Jesus Christ was "a Minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers." The Gentiles glorify Him for His mercy. True, it was of pure mercy towards the Jews that God gave the promises to their fathers; but once given He must for His truth's sake fulfil them. It is otherwise with the Gentiles. He made no covenant with them. When therefore they come to a knowledge of God they glorify Him for His mercy. For both alike Christ died. The angels, as the first heralds of the Gospel, declared that the "good news" was for "all people;" and Simeon said the Saviour was a "Light to lighten the Gentiles," as well as the "glory of His people Israel." Before the Child Jesus the first-fruits of Israel bent the knee,—Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna. Before the Child Jesus the first-fruits of the Gentiles bent the knee, even the wise men from the East. Therefore during the Advent season we sing in our songs of praise of

"Israel's strength and consolation,"

praising God for His truth towards Israel. We also sing hymns of thanksgiving for His mercy towards the Gentiles, and call the Saviour the

"Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart."

Jesus Christ is the Father's free gift to both Jew and Gentile. Both may rejoice in the one Saviour. The same love redeemed both, the same Spirit is building them up into one holy spiritual temple to the Lord.

WHEREFORE laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To Whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.—1 St. Peter ii. 1—5.

THE Season of Advent speaks to us of the calling of both Jews and Gentiles into the Church of Christ, that they all may be built up into one holy Temple to the Lord. Jesus Christ Himself is the "chief corner stone, elect, precious." He is a "sure foundation." Upon this foundation the whole building is now being fitly framed together. The Temple is being built up of all those, whether Jews or Gentiles, who turn to their Saviour. They are polished stones, fitted and prepared for their own proper places in the building. This beautiful thought of a great Temple formed of all faithful members of the Church of Christ ought to have an influence for good upon our lives, and upon our intercourse with our fellow men. It ought to unite us one to the other in bonds of love. It ought to produce peace and harmony. None should "hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain." With one mouth we should praise God, and confess His holy Name. "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth," was the inscription which the angels, on the first Christmas Eve, wrote over the gates of the Church. The prophet Malachi rebukes Israel for dealing treacherously one with another, saying, "Have we not all one Father? Hath not God created us? Why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?" We are still closer connected together than were the Jews. We have been born again out of one great love. We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. It should be said of the Church now as it was in days gone by, "See how these Christians love one another."

AS He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.—1 St. Peter i. 15, 16.

FALLEN man could never have known how to restore the lost nobility of human nature, had not a pure Man, sinless, free from stain, taken our nature upon Him, and walked in our midst, and by His Example showed us what He meant by a divine life and conversation. No acquired knowledge, no mere teaching could do this. It needed an example. To live well is an art. An art is best learned by example, and from a model. To be holy, even as God is holy, would be impossible if God were to remain pure Spirit. We feel this, and know it. But a divine Man comes among us. We can see Him. In human form He steps into our midst. We read of His perfect obedience to His parents. We see His mercy towards suffering brethren, His love for His own, His wide and great heart open to receive all who come to Him. We see His heroic bravery, His gentleness, His manliness, His courageous yet forgiving Spirit, His certainty of victory in the presence of death. All this works on us. We recognise how we ought to use the powers given to us by God. He has given us certain talents to be employed in His service. He sets before us an Example that we may know how to use them. As our Example did the will of Him that sent Him, so we should work the works of God. Then we should feel the truth of the Poet's words:

"Happy he who thus to Heaven
Can render back the talents given."

Jesus Christ by His Example shows us that we can do so. He shows us each moment of His life that we may, even in an evil world, remain "holy as He is holy." He proves by His actions that in all places and in all stations opportunities are given to do good. Our duty is to follow Christ; not to wonder, lost in amazement, at His life, but to imitate it. And if it be asked, is that possible? the answer is given us in the Word of God, "All things are possible through Christ that strengtheneth us."

THEREFORE will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee.—Isaiah xxx. 18, 19.

THE Lord waits to be gracious unto us. He waits, and looks for improvement in us. He wants to see us renewed, made new men in Christ Jesus. Solomon said there was nothing new under the sun. Since the first Advent of Christ we can no longer say so. The first Christmas morn saw a new thing—a new power given to man, a new life. Since that day the world improves, and will continue to improve. As yet the Lord has to wait, and to be very gracious. The Church of Christ has much to contend against,—much adversity, much affliction. She has to do battle with heathenism around her, and the strength of sin within. But daily we see victory upon victory gained. We no longer see man enslaved by his fellow man. Civilisation marches onwards side by side with Christianity. The powers of darkness are being fought with and vanquished. Christian charity is ever looking for new ways to alleviate the distress in the world, and to banish sin out of it. We now know the way. If we will, we may walk in it. He has not "removed our teachers." We hear their voice saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." To point out this way, God has committed unto faithful men "the ministry of reconciliation." He has commanded His ambassadors to cry aloud, that there be no more weeping, no more complaining, but that all who wait on the Lord may be blessed. This is the great purpose of the coming of Christ. It is for this that the Spirit of God is now working in His Church. It is for this that the ambassadors of God cease not to beseech all to be "reconciled to God" through Him Who "knew no sin," that we "might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

AS a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when Thou awakest, Thou shalt despise their image. Nevertheless I am continually with Thee: Thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.—Psalm lxxiii. 20, 23, 24.

AMONG all nations sleep has ever been the representation of death. Men feel the weariness of life with its endless toil and trouble, and they look forward to sleep to give them rest. The thought of sleep and rest has something attractive in it. It gives comfort. There is a deeper truth in the emblem. In winter all Nature seems to sleep; in spring Nature wakes up out of its sleep. So wearied man lays himself down to rest at night, and wakes up with the dawn to begin again his daily work. In like manner out of what we here call man's final sleep, he shall awake; and, oh, what an awakening! We shall awaken with powers renewed. The spirit, emancipated from all that clogs and weighs it down, shall soar upward, and be satisfied with the likeness of Him Who created it. Our life here will then appear to us as "a dream." The true realities are those things we shall see when we awake. Here all things are shadows; there all things are lasting, they abide continually. When the dream of life has faded, we shall see the face of God in glory. How, then, should we treat the things of earth? We should not despise them. We should use them as steps on a ladder to mount upwards on them. Through things that are seen our gaze should pass on till it rests on the King eternal, invisible. We may here and now catch the dim outline of His form; when we awake we shall see Him as He is. Here, the glimpse which is vouchsafed to us of the glory of His Being makes us long to see and know more of Him. There, when we see Him, we shall be satisfied with His Presence. Oh, how earnestly should we ask God to "hold us by His right hand," that our footsteps slip not! How earnestly should we pray that He would "guide us with His counsel," that we may ever climb steadily upwards, and at last be "received into glory!"

IN Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. For Thou art my hope, O Lord God: Thou art my trust from my youth. Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth. For mine enemies speak against me; and they that lay wait for my soul take counsel together, saying, God hath forsaken him: persecute and take him; for there is none to deliver him. O God, be not far from me: O my God, make haste for my help.—Psalm lxxi. 1, 5, 9—12.

A BEAUTIFUL appeal to God from the aged Psalmist for help against enemies from without, and temptations to distrust God from within. The hostility of the enemy was determined and persistent. "Mine enemies speak against me," he says; "they lay wait for my soul." Temptations from within were strong. He was tempted to distrust God. He feared lest He should cast him off in his old age. But strength and courage are given him, and this is the great source of his unflinching courage: "Thou art my hope, O Lord God; Thou art my trust from my youth." Every true believer in God is subject to like conflicts,—enemies are busy without, doubts and fears within. It is the Lord Himself Who tries us. Because we are precious in His sight, He refines us with afflictions. No one can escape trial. Indeed, we ought not even try to do so, for trial is the channel of many blessings. The Psalmist is drawn nearer to God by his trials. The perils which encompassed him were great and imminent; still what did they signify to the man whose trust was in God? He could brave the dangers, and escape the enemies, and conquer his own distrust by means of that short but comprehensive prayer, "My God, make haste for my help." If we feel our faith weak and our enemies strong; if we see any danger in our position, any difficulties in our way, let us turn to our all-sufficient Helper. Let us say, "O Lord, be not far from me; my God, make haste for my help." It is an ejaculatory prayer which we may dart up to heaven on every occasion, and in every emergency. A short, sweet, suggestive prayer which cannot remain long unanswered.

The Second Saturday in Advent.—Evening.

COMFORT ye, comfort ye My people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.—Isaiah xl. 1—3.

THERE are few passages in the Old Testament better known than this. The whole chapter is second to none in the Bible. How wonderful the love and pity of God for His people. He had indeed been compelled to chastise, but now He comforts them. Twice the word is repeated, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people," to give emphasis and double assurance. The time was close at hand when they should be delivered from their captivity, and the blessings promised to their forefathers be theirs. The prophet is commanded to "speak comfortably to Jerusalem," and to tell her that her "iniquity was pardoned." The chastisement in the past was sufficient; she should now be comforted, lest she might be "swallowed up by overmuch sorrow." How beautifully are the blessings of the Gospel dispensation unfolded! But even these are but a type of the inestimable and unclouded blessings to be bestowed on the faithful at the second coming of the Lord. Now, the Church is militant, her warfare is not yet accomplished, she still has to strive and fight against many enemies. Then, she will be triumphant, and receive double at the Lord's hand. Here, we are still in captivity, we have not completely burst our bonds. Then, our chains will be broken for ever. Here, we are in a strange country, we seek a city which hath eternal foundations. Then, we shall be restored to our own land, and become citizens of that city whose builder is God. Are we preparing for this time of blessedness? Just as the voice in the wilderness cried "prepare," before the first coming of the Lord, so now voices everywhere are re-echoing the cry, "prepare," for the "glory of the Lord" will soon be revealed, and "all flesh shall see it together." If we are in a state of preparation we also may rejoice in the Advent cry, "Comfort ye, comfort ye My people."

The Third Sunday in Advent.

AND John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art Thou He that should come? or look we for another?—St. Luke vii. 19.

HOW full of striking incident is the life of John the Baptist,—how well adapted to instruct and to edify. He was not only a prophet himself, but the subject of prophecy. In the Book of Malachi he is spoken of as the messenger, the forerunner sent to prepare the way of the Lord. His very birth was supernatural. An angel announces the fact, the time is fixed, and the name by which he should be called predicted. The name was significant, and full of deep meaning. It intimates the blessed news that now God would be gracious unto His people. His whole life was more than natural. He was filled with the Spirit from his birth, sanctified by the same Spirit, and specially prepared by communion with God for the great work he had to do. Great indeed was that work. He was to stand forth boldly, and announce the glad tidings of the King of kings. He was to call aloud to the multitudes to awake and hearken—to awake to the great concerns of religion, and hearken to the voice of God. But he had other work also to do: he had to prepare individual souls for the Lord. The disciples that he gathered round himself he taught to look away from him and on to the Lamb of God, Whom they were to be ready to receive as soon as He should declare Himself. Thus he taught and toiled in his Master's service. He suffered also in the same service. Behold him in his lowly prison, disappointed and perplexed. His faith indeed never for a moment wavers, but he needs reassurance, and this his Master vouchsafes. Faith ever needs to be increased, strengthened, and confirmed. He dies the martyr's death, full of hope, and firm to the last. Thus lived and died this devoted servant of God, who was "a prophet, yea, more than a prophet." Would that we had more of his sincerity, more of his spirit of self-sacrifice, more of his earnest devotion to duty, and more of his willing submission to the Will of God.

THIS is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.—St. Luke vii. 27, 28.

JOHN the Baptist was brought prominently before us throughout yesterday's services. In the passage now read we have Christ's own testimony concerning him who was "a prophet, yea, and much more than a prophet." We remark three distinguishing attributes in John's character. First, firmness. He was no reed bending in the direction of every wind that blows. He passed through a time peculiarly fitted to damp enthusiasm, to scatter visions of hope, and to infuse doubts of the reality of the great facts he was unfolding to men. Yet he was firm unto the end; his ardour, moral feeling, and faith never deserted him. He sternly rebukes all that was wrong even in those who were living in the high places of the world, and could crush him by a word. His next attribute was self-denial. He was not one to clothe himself in "soft raiment," or close the eyes to sin, in order that he might abide unmolested in king's palaces. It was not in prosperity, in honour, or amid triumphs, but in disappointment, desertion, and what the world calls disgrace, that John the Baptist did his life's work. His third great characteristic was faithfulness. Even though the cause with which he identified himself seemed a failure, even though his friends were scattered, his liberty trodden under foot, and he himself chained in the wretched dungeon of the Castle Machærus; still he was faithful,—faithful to his God, faithful to Him Whose forerunner he was, faithful to himself and to his doctrine. These attributes may belong to us. Far from being unapproachable, John was an illustration of what we all may become. Our Lord in this passage holds him up not merely to excite an ineffectual admiration, but to stir us up to be followers of him than whom there was no greater prophet born of woman. May his attainments in manly virtues and tender graces also be ours.

THOU hast not called upon Me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of Me, O Israel. Thou hast not brought Me the small cattle of thy burnt offerings; neither hast thou honoured Me with thy sacrifices. Thou hast made Me to serve with thy sins, thou hast wearied Me with thine iniquities. I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. Put Me in remembrance: let us plead together: declare thou, that thou mayest be justified.—Isaiah xliii. 22—26.

WHAT more gracious invitation could be given by God to man than this we have now read: "Put Me in remembrance, let us plead together." Who is it that speaks? "The Lord, the Holy One, the Saviour of Israel, our King." And who is it that He invites? All those who have rebelled against Him; who have been disloyal to Him; who have refused the service and worship which He demands; who have "wearied Him with their iniquities." Yet He says, "Put Me in remembrance." Oh how gracious, how forgiving! "Put me in remembrance, let us plead together;" that is, remind Me of any plea which you can urge in your defence. Now what plea can we urge? As we look within we find none. All within is naturally dark, and our hearts are naturally the source of evil thoughts. We have no innate holiness to urge as a plea, "no power in ourselves to help ourselves." What then can we urge? What can we call to the remembrance of our God? We can remind Him of His own revealed character, His faithfulness, His promises, His tender mercies. These were David's pleas, and they may be ours. We have yet another: even the love of God manifested in His Son. This we may plead that we "may be justified." This we may plead that God's Spirit may dwell within us, to sanctify us, to make us holy, until in the end we be presented faultless before the throne. Let us have no fear in our hearts as we approach God. Let us believe that He is merciful, eternally, unutterably merciful. Let us "put Him in remembrance" of His mercy and His love. Let us trust ourselves to Him, and He will give us our heart's desire for His dear Son's sake.

WE beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.—1 Thessalonians v. 12, 13.

FROM this and many similar passages in Holy Scripture we learn that each member of Christ's Church has a duty to perform towards "them which labour among" us in spiritual things. To remind us of our duty the Church sets apart the Ember-seasons, at which time she calls on the faithful, first, to make diligent enquiry about those who seek admission to Holy Orders, and to state openly any cause or reason which in the course of these enquiries may come to light why a candidate should be rejected. This is a power which is given to all the faithful laity, and which they ought conscientiously to use, that only "fit persons may be chosen to serve in the sacred ministry of the Church." Again, they have a duty to perform towards those who are approved and ordained to any holy function. St. Paul tells us we should "esteem them very highly for their work's sake." To do this we must have some idea what their work is, and how they do it, and therefore the apostle adds, "We beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you." Know them, not to criticise or to sit in judgment on them, but to esteem and help them in their labours. The prayers also of the faithful are desired in accordance with St. Paul's often repeated request, "Brethren, pray for us." We should pray for those who labour among us; pray that they may be esteemed, not merely for themselves, nor for brilliant abilities, or outward attractions, but for their work's sake, that work to which they are appointed—the work of reconciliation, the work of ministry, serving in the Church. Pray that they "be replenished with the truth of God's doctrine, and endued with innocency of life." Pray with and for them, and thus help them to carry out to a good end the work they have to do, and for which they have been sent forth.

TO whom will ye liken Me, and make Me equal, and compare Me, that we may be like? They lavish gold out of the bag, and weigh silver in the balance, and hire a goldsmith; and he maketh it a god: they fall down, yea, they worship. They bear him upon the shoulder, they carry him, and set him in his place, and he standeth; from his place shall he not remove: yea, one shall cry unto him, yet can he not answer, nor save him out of his trouble. Remember this, and shew yourselves men: bring it again to mind, O ye transgressors. Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else.—Isaiah xlvi. 5—9.

HOW early in the history of man do we see the desire for some outward visible object of worship? The same desire exists still. It is difficult to root out, difficult to make men feel that God is a Spirit; and that there can be no image or likeness of Him. God knew what was in man, and therefore from the very first He suffered him not to see Him, or any similitude of Him; lest he should bow down before some image made in His likeness and worship it. See how God rebukes His people for their folly. Though they lavish their gold, and weigh out their silver, and make it into a god, yet can it not answer. It cannot save out of trouble him who cries unto it. The Almighty bids them solemnly remember this and show themselves men, and not fall down before dumb idols. The same message should now be sent to the heathen; to those who still worship idols made with their own hands. The Ember-week reminds us that we should earnestly pray that fit instruments should be raised for this purpose; and we should not be backward to help in this good cause. But is there no idol worship amongst ourselves? Do we never set up idols in our hearts? Everything that stands between us and our God is an idol. Everything that lessens our affection for God is an idol. Let us see to it that our hearts are free from idol worship. St. John's words may be of value to us as well as to those to whom they were first addressed: "Little children, keep yourselves from idols."

The Fourth Sunday in Advent.

REJOICE in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.—Philippians iv. 4—7.

THE apostle exhorts Christians to be joyful. Does not such an exhortation seem strange? Ought not joy to spring up of its own accord? If joy be in the heart, can its outward manifestation be repressed? And yet St. Paul exhorts, nay, commands Christians to be joyful and to rejoice. He does so, not here only, but in all his writings. As we read his Epistles, we find the call to rejoice echoing through them all. Now St. Paul would not command anything that is unnecessary; and therefore we do well to search into the meaning of the exhortation. The early Fathers of the Church reckoned among the seven deadly sins, a despairing sadness; considering it a sin likely to lead on to spiritual death if suffered to continue. Yet how often we meet with mournful Christians, complaining Christians, sad Christians. As we speak the words we feel that they are a contradiction in themselves. We feel that there should be no such thing as a mournful Christian. Why are we sad? Is it not on account of a lurking unbelief in our hearts? And why do we not believe? Because our hearts are divided in their allegiance. They are divided in their desires to serve the Lord and the world. This divided allegiance causes unquiet consciences. An unquiet conscience awakens fear. Fear suffers neither faith nor peace to reign within; and where these are not, there true joy cannot be found. What then should we do? The Holy Christmas Festival which is so close at hand tells us. Let us fall down before the Babe in the manger, worshipping and adoring. Let us cast out all unbelief from within us. Let us pay homage to Christ as our King. Then we shall find little difficulty in obeying the precept,—"Rejoice in the Lord."

AND I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.—Revelation xxi. 2—4.

"GLADNESS and joy" shall take the place of "sorrow and mourning" in every individual soul admitted, through the mercies of God, into "the new Jerusalem." There we shall be completely separated from all that causes pain. "Former things are passed away." Death, sorrow, crying, all passed and gone. But in "the new Jerusalem" there is much more than a mere freedom from grief. There is eternal life. There is joy in God's Presence. There are treasures unfailing. There is work without painful effort; pleasures without satiety. There is peace, a peace beyond our finite powers to understand. There is quiet, overflowing happiness. But beyond and above all this "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." Do we love Him? Do we long for His appearing? Do we earnestly desire, and pray for the time when the Church shall be prepared for the Bridegroom's coming; when she shall be completely adorned as a bride for her husband? Are we doing anything to hasten the time? We can hasten it by preparing our own hearts; we can hasten it by helping in the work of the Church at home; we can hasten it by helping the mission work of the Church abroad. Oh, that we more ardently desired future glory! Oh, that our desire might manifest itself in prayers and almsgiving, and in every good work! Oh, that our hearts were more full of love towards our loving Father; that loving Him above all things we might obtain His heavenly promises, even the gladness and joy of the new Jerusalem.

CHRIST also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously: Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by Whose stripes ye were healed.—1 St. Peter ii. 21—24.

THIS is a quotation from one of the best known among the Messionic prophecies. The prophet describes a Saviour, true, a suffering Saviour, but a Saviour triumphant over His sufferings. It is the very Saviour Whom we want. And yet when He came, when every word of the prophecy was literally fulfilled, how few "believed the report." It is not, as some seem to think, a light, an easy thing to believe in Jesus Christ. It is the work of God. It is the sum and substance of our earthly duty and our earthly interest. It is the recognition of our King and the Head of our race. It is the entrance into union with the God of all creation,—the God of all life-through Him Who enters into and dwells in the believing soul and cleanses it from all iniquity. Oh, let us listen to Him when He speaks to us, and yield a willing obedience! Let us return unto the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls. Let us not value only what pertains to the appetite and the sustenance of our perishing bodies in this our earthly and transitory state; let us rather draw nigh to Him Who was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted," but is, at the same time, the food of our souls. He feeds us by giving Himself to us, and this Heavenly food will sustain us through, and past the period of time, and carry us on to immortality. We are possessors not alone of a body, and citizens not alone of a material world, but possessors of a soul, which may, like the infant's frame which becomes developed into a man, be developed from its scarce perceptible being, till it be fitted to stand in the Presence of God, and dwell with Him in unclouded light for ever in the Heavenly world, where our true citizenship is.

Saint Thomas the Apostle.

YE that love the Lord, hate evil: He preserveth the souls of His saints; He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness.—Psalm xcvii. 10—12.

WE learn some valuable lessons from the time of year, in which we commemorate the festival of St. Thomas. This is the shortest day. Sixteen hours of darkness and but eight hours of light. We should watch for the light, and be ready to work while it is day. The day of grace, the time of our probation here, is short. We should watch, and work, and pray while it lasts. Again, we are taught a lesson of faith. It is hard to believe that in the shortest and coldest day of the year the sun is nearer to us than in the longest and brightest. Yet so it is. So also in the spiritual life; when we are bowed down with a sense of sin, when our hearts are cold, when we think God must be very far from us, it is then that He is nearest to us. If only we trust God we shall find He is nearer to us in sorrow than in joy. If we "love the Lord and hate evil," He will "preserve our souls" in adversity. Again, this should be a day of hope. The shortest day is soon past. We look forward to the Spring when all creation will sing the praises of the Creator, and "the Heavens declare His righteousness." The cold and darkness will have passed, new life and vigour will be imparted. So also in the spiritual life, in hours of darkness, in times of trial and affliction, "light is sown for the righteous." One lesson more. This should be a day of joy, and "gladness for the upright in heart." We are but four days from the Christmas festival which speaks of Him Who is the true light in our darkness, which sheds peace on the earth, and preaches glad tidings telling "all people" to come and "see the glory" of God. Let us then on this day "rejoice in the Lord, and give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness."

BE watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.—Revelation iii. 2, 3.

THE true Advent call, "Be watchful," resounds again and again in our ears at this season of the year. We must live in a state of watchfulness, ready for labour, ready for suffering, ready for anything God may call us to; that our works may be found perfect before God. Our Lord is at the very door. We know not when He may knock. If we refuse to watch He will come on us as a thief. Oh! if He were thus to come to us, what should our end be? Let us strengthen then our good resolutions; let us determine to watch and persevere in watching. Then we shall be always ready; we shall not be startled when the Master knocks. All will be ready. We shall open the doors gladly and admit Him. Oh, the blessedness of those who shall be found thus watching and prepared! "They shall walk in white; for they are worthy." The Master finding all things ready, will confess their names before His Father, and before His angels. Names thus confessed "will never be blotted out of the Book of Life." Are we watching? If not, let the warnings of Scripture and our consciences rouse us from our sleep and carelessness. Every moment of delay brings fresh danger, and renders return more difficult. At any moment the Lord may come and call us. Do we remember what we have received and heard? We shall have to account for both. Are we holding them fast? Are we using what we have received? Are we profiting by what we have heard? May the Lord grant to us the spirit of recollectedness that we may obey His command to "be watchful." May He give us grace to hold fast that which we have received and heard; that at His second coming we may walk in white and hear our names confessed before our Father in Heaven.

I WILL wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord: that I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all Thy wondrous works. Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth.—Psalm xxvi. 6—8.

PUBLIC worship should ever consist of three things, praise, prayer, and thanksgiving. When we enter the house of God we should try to realise the unseen and awful Presence of Him Who made us and all the world, Who holds our souls in life, and holds in His hands our eternal destinies. Do we do this? Do we realise that every church, however small, however insignificant in outward appearance, is nevertheless God's house, and "the place where His honour dwelleth." Again, we should prepare to meet Him. David says, "I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass Thine altar, O Lord." God's worship requires us to be holy in life. When we offer praise to God we should not do so with defiled hands. We should go up to the house of the Lord with hands clean, with minds set on righteousness, and with souls filled with a sense of His Presence. Then we should remember the purpose for which we go up to God's house of prayer. This cannot be expressed better than in the words of our Prayer-book, "to acknowledge our sins, to render thanks for the great benefits that we have received, to set forth His most worthy praise, to hear His most holy Word, and to ask those things which are necessary as well for the body as the soul." Here we are distinctly told that in our public worship we give two things, and receive two things. We give thanks and praise; we receive instruction and the necessary food for our soul. As we enter the church let us think of the blessings God has bestowed upon us, and be ready to thank Him for what He has done for us. Let us think of what He is, and be ready to praise Him. A message is to be delivered; let us determine by God's help to profit by it. The spiritual food necessary for the soul's health and growth are offered; let us not turn away without receiving them.

Christmas Eve.

THERE were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.—St. Luke ii. 8—11, 13, 14.

TO simple lowly shepherds was first revealed the great fact that a Saviour was born into the world. It was during their night-watch that this revelation was made to them. They were occupied in their ordinary everyday task; watching their flocks cautiously, carefully; guarding that which was committed to their care. What useful, valuable lessons the Holy Spirit teaches us in this miraculous call of the shepherds. God reveals Himself to the lowly. Do we resemble these shepherds of Bethlehem in lowliness and freedom from worldly longings? God reveals Himself to those who are faithful in the discharge of their ordinary everyday work. Are we vigilant in the discharge of our duties? Do we perform our daily tasks as in the sight of God? These shepherds had a strong faith in God. They never doubted the heavenly vision. Have we a firm faith in God? Do we accept in simple undoubting faith all that God has revealed to us concerning Himself? When the angel told them where they should find the Infant Redeemer, they went "with haste" to the place thus revealed. They do not seek Him elsewhere. They seek Him where He may be found. Where do we seek our Saviour? We shall not find Him in the resorts of sin, nor amid the sinful pleasures or ambitions of this world. Let us seek Him in His holy house, in detachment from the pleasures and honours of this world, in the faithful, loving discharge of our daily tasks, in lowliness and meekness. Let us seek Him "with haste."

Christmas-Day.

AND Joseph went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judæa, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) to be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.—St. Luke ii. 4—7.

MANY places have been adorned by a grateful people with memorials of those who have been their benefactors. In one place we see an equestrian statue, in another a bust, here a tablet, there a monument, on each is inscribed a brief history of what a man did for his brother man. His birthplace is thus made known to succeeding generations. The greatest, the holiest, the noblest birthplace is Bethlehem. There God has given us His only-begotten Son; there peace was established between earth and heaven; there divine grace shone in the distinctest way; there was written the brightest page in the world's history; there the love of God was manifested. True, the love of God is everywhere manifest. It is seen in the rising of the sun; it is seen in the blooming and blossoming of the trees. It is seen in the earth clothing itself each spring with living green, and in the fields when they yield their rich and golden harvest. But at Bethlehem God's love was peculiarly manifested. There God gave His Son. He gave Him as a Child and yet a king; a Child and yet our God. A Child to whom so many prophetic utterances refer; a Child who makes all things new, a new Paradise, a new Heaven, a new relationship between God and man. Oh, what thoughts cling around Christmas! The Father gives His only Son for man. With this gift—the first great Christmas gift—He freely gives us all things. Let us thank God for His goodness. Let us thank and praise Him here in anticipation of the time when in union with all the blessed spirits, we shall praise Him in one full burst of harmony throughout all eternity.

Saint Stephen's Day.

AND Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him. As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison. Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.—Acts viii. 1—4.

ST. STEPHEN'S death may teach us how holy was his life. He could not have reached at one bound to such a height of faith and love. He reached it through prayer and watching and waiting upon his Redeemer. He was a true follower of his Master. He repeats His very words, "Receive my spirit," "Lay not this sin to their charge." Even the apostles he surpasses in the unrivalled honour of receiving before them the crown of martyrdom. He dies for his God. But "men would not have the courage to die for God, if God had not become man to die for them." St. Stephen's work did not end with his martyrdom. "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The Church has been ever a gainer by persecution. The "great persecution" which arose on St. Stephen's account stirred up the faithful to work with added zeal. They were "scattered abroad," but even this was helpful to the cause. Wherever they went they sowed the seed of the Word. Saul of Tarsus may have thought that, with a single effort, he would stamp out the hated Nazarite sect. God determines otherwise. He gives courage to the scattered disciples. The Church enlarges its boundaries, and out of the persecutor is formed a pillar. The great Apostle of the Gentiles is part of "the seed" which sprang from "the martyr's blood." Well may we praise God for the love and courage He gives to men. Well may we pray for grace to suffer in the same spirit in which St. Stephen suffered. If we suffer patiently for Christ and the truth happy are we.

Saint John the Evangelist's Day.

THIS is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.—1 St. John i. 5—10.

THIS morning we saw something of the life of the Evangelist St. John. This evening we hear his words and listen to his teaching. St. John is one of the most distinguished writers of the New Testament Scriptures. His Gospel is especially valuable, since in it are treasured up the words, the dialogues, the conversation of the Master he loved so well. His three Epistles are full of the most important truths, and teem with the spirit of the writer's pure and tender love. He is the Apostle of love; not that his character is soft, yielding, or effeminate; by no means: he is stern where sternness is required, and fears not to rebuke as well as exhort. But he has grown into the likeness of Him Whom he loved, according to the well-known law of our being, by which we gradually grow into the likeness of those we intensely love. One more writing he has left behind him, the sublime Revelation. There he depicts the marvellous scenes of earth, of heaven, and of hell; the events of time—the awful judgments on the world-power—and the blessedness of the redeemed and ransomed. We have there unfolded to us the history of the present dispensation, the suffering, the work, and the final victory of the Church. He tells us, in the words we read this evening, the object of all his writings,—that we might have fellowship with the Father, and with the Son, and with all the saints; and that we might walk in the light of the truth, being cleansed from sin by the blood of Jesus Christ.

The Innocents' Day.

I LOOKED, and lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's Name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps; and they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders; and no man could learn that song, but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth: these were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God, and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault before the throne of God.—Revelation xiv. 1—5.

THE holy Innocents were "redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb." They were redeemed before they knew ought of the cares of this life, or were made acquainted with sin. The hearts of the fathers and mothers in Bethlehem were torn with grief and anguish, but the spirits of innocent infants rejoiced with joy unspeakable, being "without fault before the throne of God." Blessed are all those who have the "Father's Name written in their foreheads." Blessed are all those who have been brought up in homes of purity, who have been early guarded by loving parents from falling into sin or tasting the sinful pleasures of an evil world. Blessed and happy they who continue to walk in the paths of purity, who keep their white baptismal robes pure and undefiled. Do we cherish a lowly, childlike spirit? Do we long to be found of God guileless and without fault? Do we submit to the Will of our Heavenly Father, as a guileless, innocent child submits and obeys the will of an earthly parent? We all would like to be found at the last day "without fault before the throne of God;" are we trying to be so now? Let us ask God for help. Let us ask Him to give us the trustful, unselfish spirit of an innocent child. Let us earnestly watch and pray that we may be among "the hundred forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth."

FOR Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory: and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of the Lord shall name. Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God.—Isaiah lxii. 1—3.

THESE are precious words, and yet it has been with them as with many another watchword of Christianity, their very preciousness has brought them into familiar use, and the familiarity with the outward expression does much to mask their inner beauty from us. They paint for us in glowing terms the great love of God,—a love which considers no sacrifice too great to save man from himself and from sin. They speak also of his mercy,—mercy which knows no bounds beyond which it cannot forgive. How soul-inspiring the view we here get of the mercy of God. It extends to all, to the Jew first. "For Zion's sake," the Lord says, "I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness." But the Gentiles also shall see God's righteousness, and seeing it, will be won over to respect God's people, and accept the salvation offered to them. All these shall be called by a "new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name." This "new name" leads us on in thought to the Book of the Revelation. There we find a new name written on the stone given to those who overcome,—a new name is written on the "hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth." Those who have this new name shall no more be termed "Forsaken," but Hephzibah—that is, "My delight is in her." Oh, that the Lord's delight may be in us—oh, that we too may have His Name written in our foreheads,—that when the Son of God again comes we may be found worthy to stand with Him on Mount Zion marked with His Father's Name!

SINCE the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee, what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him. But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and there is none that calleth upon Thy Name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of Thee: but now, O Lord, Thou art our Father; we are the clay, and Thou our Potter; and we all are the work of Thy hand.—Isaiah lxiv. 4, 6—8.

GOD'S faithful people acknowledge their own unworthiness, and His goodness and righteousness. If we desire to be God's faithful people we must renounce all confidence in self, all trust in our own righteousness. We must confess that we are but clay in the hands of the Potter. We must not seek to establish our own righteousness before God, but draw near to Him as we are. God stands with open arms to receive us. He says, "Draw nigh to Me and I will draw nigh to thee." When we have come to ourselves and made the first step, when we stir ourselves up and call upon His Name, then God receives us, and however weak our faith, will reveal to us things which "men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen." What true comfort there is in knowing this. Of ourselves we can do no good thing, we cannot save ourselves, we cannot redeem ourselves. When we know and confess this, God draws near and shows us the better way. He has already saved us, He has redeemed us. He is our Father. We were rebellious children, but now that we have returned He acknowledges us, clothes us in the best robe, and orders all to be got ready that He has "prepared for them that wait for Him." Let us learn from this the plain, simple, practical wisdom of coming to God through Christ, and learning of Him. Let us forsake all other, and commit ourselves unreservedly to Him, for "He is our Father, and we the work of His hands." Let us ask God to teach us how miserably frail and weak we are, and pray Him to assist us with His Almighty strength.

December 31st.—Evening.

I AM Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. —Revelation xxii. 13, 14, 17.

THESE remarkable, these glorious words are almost the last in the sacred volume. They bespeak by their sublimity and simplicity the inspiration of the Spirit of God who dictated them. From age to age, and from century to century during the history of the human race, they stand forth to the children of men of every tongue and kindred and clime, as a free, a heavenly call to advance from earth to heaven, to claim a place in the coming Kingdom of the Redeemer, and to "enter in through the gates into the city." These words describe a plan of salvation for mankind worthy of a monarch's dignity. They are the magic key which unlocks the gates of heaven, and discloses to the view, in the vast and mighty perspective of the future, glory, honour, immortality, for ever and ever; not bought, as is the usage amongst men, by something handed over in exchange, but presented to man by his Maker free as the life given him at his birth, free as the air he breathes, free as the canopy of heaven that stretches out above his head. True indeed, it is, we are not prepared at once,—in a moment,—for the future state of bliss. Time, experience, meditation, often trial and suffering are necessary to fit us for the presence of God. But it is not true that these procure for us our title to salvation. This is bestowed freely, as a gift. Prayer, study of the Word of God, meditation, trials, are the road through which we must pass on our way to heaven. We are all travelling this road now. We have just passed another milestone. We are about to enter on a new year. Let us ask God to be our Guide, that we may "do His commandments and have right to the tree of life."

LET brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body. Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.—Hebrews xiii. 1—3, 5.

BROTHERLY love should exist between all the sons and daughters of the living God. As children we should love our heavenly Father; but if we "love not our brother whom we have seen, how can we love God whom we have not seen?" Now see how many reasons there are for brotherly love to be implanted in the hearts of the faithful. We pray to one God Who is our Father. He has created us all, why then should we despise one another? Again, the Father has given His only-begotten Son for all alike—poor and rich, young and old. His apostle has declared that in Him there is neither "Jew nor Greek, bond nor free," but all are one in Christ Jesus. Let us then in this new year strive to keep "the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace." Let us realise the meaning of that expression, "all one in Christ Jesus;" and let us pray, and earnestly desire that there be more true united action in the Church, in the state, and in our homes. We know that all bodies are formed of many members, having different functions. The whole body is not an eye, or an ear. We want also the hands and the feet. So in the state there must be kings or chief rulers, magistrates and subjects. In the house, parents and children, masters and servants. The head does not stand alone, but with the other members form but one body, so in the Church, the state, the home, all the members must be bound together in one body under one head. Let each member do his duty thoroughly in connection with, and dependence on the other members. Let us all work willingly in the same great cause. Let our object be the glory of God, the true well-being of our fellow-man, and the utter overthrow of all that is evil and wrong.

AND the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.—Genesis iii. 14, 15.

THE long row of prophecies about the Messiah has its beginning in this, concerning the woman's seed crushing the serpent's head. This prophecy was early called by the Church a "short Gospel." And justly so. It states briefly all the chief points in the Gospel,—the birth of Jesus, His death, His strife, His victory. In addition to these, it intimates that He will take away Satan's power, that the defeat of the adversary is our victory; his fall our resurrection. This word must have been to our first parents mighty to dry away all tears; it must have been like a bright star in the dark night; as a cooling spring in the midst of a burning desert. This word, promising salvation, must have raised them as it were on angel's wings, and made their hearts joyful, and reconciled to Him from Whom they had torn themselves loose. We, too, may thank God for this prophecy. "Praise the Lord, O our souls, and forget not all His benefits." We have still greater reason to be thankful. We have seen its fulfilment. We know that the Son of Man "was manifested to destroy the works of the devil." We need not live in a state of enmity. Though we have sinned, Christ has taken away our sin. Though we have rebelled against the commandments of God, Christ has reconciled us, and won for us forgiveness. We need not live in darkness, or gloom, or at a distance from God. The true light now shines to dispel our darkness. We may rejoice in the Lord, and fly to our God as a sure refuge. The gates of the true Paradise have been thrown wide open. All may enter; all may eat of "the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God," and live for ever.

A CERTAIN man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it.—St. Luke xiii. 6—8.

THE Lord, the owner of His vineyard, comes year by year seeking fruit from every plant which He has planted. He stands now before the tree of our life, and asks for the fruit which we should have brought forth during the past year. He demands fruit as a proof that we are alive, and growing. He has planted us in the good soil of the church; He has fed and nourished our souls with the gentle dew of His grace; the rain from heaven has fallen on us; the Sun of righteousness has poured His bright beams around us. What has been the result? Have we profited by these blessings? Have we grown thereby? Is there any fruit from the last year that we can present to God? The kind of fruit God demands is absolute submission to Him, obedience to His commands, and a right use of all opportunities for doing good and receiving good. Have we used as we ought our opportunities? Have we listened to all God's invitations? Do we live in a state of readiness to obey His commands, whatever they may be, and whenever they may come? If God gives us in this life a large measure of health and happiness, do we thank Him for His mercies, and praise His holy Name? Or, if He send us adversity to prove us, to try us, are we patient? Do we humble ourselves beneath His hand? These are questions each must answer for himself. They are questions we should not fail to ask as we enter the new year. We should ask God to forgive the past, and give us more strength for the future. In the words of St. Augustine we may say, "O Lord my God, that portion of my life which I have already lived do Thou hide and cover, that which I have still to live do Thou rule and guide."

HE that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil.—1 St. John iii. 8—10.

"THE devil sinneth from the beginning." Yes, and from the beginning he has been tempting man to sin. No sooner were our first parents created than he tempts and conquers. Emboldened by his success, he enters the lists with Cain, and wins a still easier victory. In Enoch he finds one who can resist, and, in the strength given him from on high, can conquer. He receives his reward. He was translated, because he had this testimony that he pleased God. Still wickedness grew and increased to such a degree that it repented God He had created man. Thanks be to God, He devised means to "destroy the works of the devil." "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested." For this purpose He was born into the world an infant of days. For this purpose He lived and suffered, and died and rose again. He "was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil." The power of Satan has already been curtailed and broken; it will be altogether destroyed. That he has still great power is seen in the amount of sin and evil around us. The Son of God has indeed appeared as man's champion. He has conquered in the fight, but He leaves to man his portion of the work to do. He has rendered it possible for us to fight and conquer. There is no necessity for us now to yield to temptation. If we are the children of God we shall hate sin, and do righteousness. Thus we shall be working with Christ in the great work for which He was manifested. We shall be helping to banish sin from the world, and to destroy the works of the devil. Oh, for faith and courage to work with, and under the banner of, the Captain of our salvation till every enemy be completely and altogether placed beneath His feet!

The Epiphany.

WHEN Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judæa, in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him.—St. Matthew ii. 1, 2.

THIS evening we see how the "wise men from the east" were led to the feet of the Infant Redeemer. It is probable they were, like most of their countrymen, learned in astronomy, and knew well the names and respective places of the stars. The upward gaze necessary for studying the heavens made them lift up their thoughts above the things of sense and of time. Who can look up into the starry heavens and not long for a better time for himself and for the world? They knew something about these better times promised to man; they probably had read the prophecies of Balaam. The little light which they had they used, and God saw fit to give them more light. He sends a special star, a star they had never seen before, to guide them and lead them not to an earthly king, but to One Whose kingdom was not of this world, but a spiritual kingdom, Whose "goings forth were from of old, from everlasting." Their hearts had been prepared. They rejoiced again and again when they saw the star. When they entered the simple dwelling over which it stood, they were ready to do homage to Him Whom they acknowledged as a King. We have more knowledge, more light than these wise men of old. Our responsibilities are greater; our duties better defined. First, we should prepare our hearts by a diligent use of the means which have been given us, to receive and make use of more light. Christ the true Light shines into our hearts. As we receive His light we should reflect it, just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, and sheds a soft brightness over the earth when the sun for a time has left us. And lastly, we should help in manifesting, making known Christ to the Gentiles, the people covered with gross darkness, by our prayers, by our almsgivings, and by all other means in our power.

FOR of a truth against Thy holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the Name of Thy holy Child Jesus.—Acts iv. 27—30.

THE Apostles Peter and John had wrought a miraculous cure on the lame man laid daily at the beautiful gate of the Temple in Jerusalem. The rulers of the Jews were offended because St. Peter declared that it was through the Name of Jesus Whom they had crucified, that the lame man stood before them whole. They could find "nothing how they might punish them." They therefore threaten them and let them go. Their threats have no influence on the apostles. They do not fear what man can do unto them. They return to their own company and report all that was done and said. Mark well the faith of the disciples. With one accord they worship their Lord and God, and acknowledge that all that had been done to the "holy Child Jesus," had been done according to God's determined counsel. For themselves they ask for more faith and courage. They had to contend against powerful enemies. They needed courage and firmness that "with all boldness they might speak the Word." The Lord is not slow in answering their prayers. He manifests His Presence amongst them, and vouchsafes visible tokens that their prayer was heard, and that He was near to help and defend. Thus God comforts His faithful people, filling their hearts with joy and gladness. We have enemies who threaten us on all sides. They can but threaten, they cannot do us any harm. God is with us. He will hear our prayers. He will comfort our hearts, and give us courage and strength. He will comfort us by the consciousness of His Presence, and strengthen us by His Spirit. Only let us have faith and trust our loving God.

AND the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul; neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common. And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles' feet. —Acts iv. 32—35.

THE Lord meant His Church to be one communion. In the first ages nothing else was thought of. Amid a great diversity of nations, conditions, talents, there was a perfect concord. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and of one soul." How pure and beautiful were the first beginnings of the Church. How like an innocent child, happy, affectionate, unselfish. The "multitude of them that believed" were so closely united that no complaints were heard, there were no ill-natured thoughts, no injustice. "Great grace was upon them all." Man's sinful heart, and the envy and malice of Satan did not long permit such peace and happiness to exist. Sin soon entered to disturb the peace of the Church, and the vanity of man, within a few short years, caused sad rents to be made in the seamless garment of Christ. Since then the Church has been weakened by sects, and schisms, and by the evil lives of professing Christians. Have we helped to weaken the Church? Have we yielded to a captious criticising spirit? Have we said or done anything to give occasion to the enemies of the Church to triumph? Do we murmur, and rebel against authority, because all things are not ordered exactly as may seem best to us? The first Christians cherished and cultivated a spirit of love and liberality towards their brethren. None among them lacked anything. Do we use what we possess for the welfare and good of others? Let us seek charity, and cultivate a spirit of concord, that peace may reign in the Church, and "great grace be upon us all."

THEN the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life. And when they heard that they entered into the temple early in the morning, and taught.—Acts v. 17—21.

GREAT danger had arisen to the Church through the sin of Ananias and Sapphira. It was in danger of losing its character of holiness, and in danger of losing its influence with the people. The great Head of the Church delivers it from the danger by giving fresh evidence of His Presence in the miraculous powers bestowed on the apostles. But yet another, and apparently far more serious danger arises. These very apostles are taken and "put in the common prison." What must the people have thought as they saw the leaders of the movement thrust into the common prison. Has their God no power to save them from such degradation? Will He not work a miracle in their behalf? Even the faithful must have been sorely perplexed. Will not the arrest of the apostles put a stop to the progress of the work? Thus the Church was in danger of losing its influence both with the faithful and the unbelievers. Though in distress, the apostles were not forsaken. The Head of the Church is near. He sees all, and sends His angel to deliver them. See how He provides a two-fold opportunity to preach the "words of this life." Early in the morning, when the people gathered together for the daily morning service in the temple, the apostles taught, and their words had great influence on the multitude. When the Jewish council met they are brought before it, and again they preach in the Name of Jesus, and find that God is a very present help in trouble. God never fails those who trust in Him. Christ will ever keep and defend His Church. Neither the devices of man nor the subtilty of Satan shall ever prevail against it.

The First Sunday after the Epiphany.

I BESEECH you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.—Romans xii. 1, 2.

THE apostle here informs us that our reasonable service is to offer ourselves, body soul and spirit, to God. The reason why it is our reasonable service, he gives in the preceding chapter. We belong to God; "of Him, through Him, and unto Him, are all things; to Him be glory for ever." Now if we be His property, we ought to yield ourselves to Him; offer ourselves as "living sacrifices." If we are to offer ourselves to God, we naturally ask, what is the altar on which the Christian is to be offered up? Holy Scripture answers, God's counsel and will. To this we have to submit. Christians must learn to say with their Saviour, "Not my will, but Thine be done." The Christian must confess that both in life and in death he is not his own, but the property of his Redeemer and his God. Just as Isaac submitted to the will of his father Abraham, offering himself a willing sacrifice, so must the Christian submit himself to the will of his heavenly Father. Again, who lays him on the altar, and how is he bound? His Lord and Saviour binds him with the cords of His love. Oh, how gentle He is when binding us; how merciful, how pitiful! He will do nothing to us which is beyond our strength to endure. His yoke is easy, His burden is light. But, once more, who kindles the sacrifice, that it may burn to the glory of God? Even the spirit of God, the heavenly fire which burns out of us the last remains of sin and evil, melts down our opposing self-will and kindles instead thereof the holy flame of love. Yes, the Holy Spirit kindles the fire of love in our hearts, love to God, and love to man, and a sweet savour mounts upwards to God, and a blessing descends from above on all those who have thus "presented their bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God."

Monday after the First Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.—2 St. Peter ii. 7—9.

WHEN Abraham bade Lot choose where he would dwell, he made his deliberate choice. He chose to dwell in the cities of the plain. Worldly, interested motives alone drove him to make his choice. He seems for the moment to have suffered his selfish desires completely to sway him, and to have forgotten Him Who had hitherto led him in all his ways. His choice was made hurriedly; he had afterwards ample time and good cause for repentance. Seeing and hearing the unlawful deeds of the Sodomites, he "vexed his righteous soul,"—for though he had erred in his judgment and in his conduct, he was "righteous" still. God sees fit finally to deliver him. Nevertheless he must suffer; he suffers in Sodom, he suffers when taken prisoner with the Sodomites, he suffers when the doom of the five cities is revealed to him; but out of all his sufferings God delivers him, because there was a manifest distinction between Lot and the wicked inhabitants of the cities, though he dwelt among them. We learn from the history of Lot a useful lesson for ourselves. We live in the world. It is not desirable that we should withdraw from intercourse with our fellow-men. Our Lord Himself appeals to His Father, and says, "I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil." In the world, but not of the world. We must live in the world; but in our associations, in our chosen companions, in our allowed and cherished practices, in our conversation, we must be distinct from the world. Just as Lot, though he dwelt in Sodom, was not associated with them, was not like them, nor partakers of their deeds; so we, who live in the midst of the worldly-minded, should not be partakers of their deeds.

Tuesday after the First Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.—Acts vi. 1—3.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many dangers which threatened the Church, the number of believers daily increased. This would add much to the labours of the apostles. As yet they were the only duly appointed ministers of the Church. All the work, preaching, baptising, teaching, organising, fell on them. An opportunity is now given them of utilising for the work of the Church those who were peculiarly fitted for it. A murmuring arose as to the distribution of the funds of the Church. The apostles gladly seize the occasion. They say, "We are unable to cope with all the work now thrown upon us; choose good men; we will appoint them over this business, we will ordain them to this lower ministry, while we devote ourselves exclusively to the higher." Mark the qualifications of those who were to be admitted to the holy office and administration. They were to be of "honest report," men of good character, men whom both parties in the Church could trust. They were to be "full of the Holy Ghost," their bodies should be temples of the Holy Ghost, in all their thoughts and actions they should be guided by the Spirit. They should be filled with "wisdom" to know how to rule themselves and others in the house of God. Seven were chosen, who when the apostles had prayed and laid their hands on them, were set apart to serve as deacons in the Church. The qualifications are the same as are now required for priests and deacons in our Church. Let us earnestly pray that fit men with these necessary qualifications may ever be found to consecrate their lives and talents in the sacred service of God.

Wednesday after the First Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND the Lord appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre; and he lift up his eyes and looked, and, lo, three men stood by him. And they said unto him, Where is Sarah thy wife? And he said, Behold, in the tent. And he said, I will certainly return unto thee according to the time of life; and, lo, Sarah thy wife shall have a son. Therefore Sarah laughed within herself, saying, After I am waxed old shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also? And the Lord said unto Abraham, Wherefore did Sarah laugh? Is any thing too hard for the Lord?—Genesis xviii. 1, 2, 9, 10, 12—14.

THE same glorious Being Who announced to Abraham the terms of the covenant, now shows an interest in the approaching birth of Isaac, the promised seed, and the type of the Messiah in Whom all the families of the earth should be blessed. How highly privileged Abraham was; how blessed and privileged. God visits him. He makes revelations to him. Well may he be called "the friend of God." It was a mutual intimate friendship. He loved God, and God loved him—another proof, if proof were necessary, of the truth of God's word in the Book of Proverbs, "I love them that love Me; and those that seek Me early shall find Me." We may remark how Abraham's perfect love for God had cast out all fear. He does not tremble before his mysterious visitors. He listens calmly but reverentially to what God has to say to him. The communication is a repetition of the promise given already on three distinct occasions, but which was now more significantly confirmed by the Lord Himself in human form. Abraham believes; but long delay seems to have weakened Sarah's faith. She treats the announcement as incredible, and when taxed with her want of faith she adds falsehood to distrust. The same Lord Who announces the promise to Abraham rebukes Sarah for her hidden unbelief. Well may we say with the apostle, "Behold then the goodness and severity of God." Both are necessary: severity towards those who fall,—a needful discipline to bring them back into the way of life; but goodness towards all those who continue in His love.

Thursday after the First Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THEN Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ unto them. And the people with one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. And there was great joy in that city.—Acts viii. 5, 6, 8.

ST. PHILIP, the deacon, was one of those who were "scattered abroad" during the persecution against the Church after the death of St. Stephen. He "went down to the city of Samaria, and preached Christ." It is highly probable that the city was Sychar, in which the seed of the Word had been already sown by Christ Himself. When Jesus abode in their city two whole days, we read that "many of the Samaritans believed on Him," both "for the saying of the woman," and also because they heard "His own words." Thus they were prepared for Philip's teaching, and with "one accord gave heed unto those things which Philip spake." Samaria has been called "the bridge between Jerusalem and the world." The in-gathering of the Samaritans was the first-fruits of that holy Catholic Church which Jesus Christ came to found. We are not surprised to read that there "was great joy in that city." They had cause for joy. What are the world's honours, the world's gifts, the world's pleasures, to the pleasures, gifts, and honours of the faithful in Christ Jesus? Consider their privileges when "they were baptised, both men and women." Instead of having Satan as their master, and being in bondage to the world, they became the children of God, rejoiced in the freedom of the sons of God, and looked forward to the time when they would enter into full possession of that inheritance of which they had become heirs. Blessed privileges which belong to every baptized member of Christ's Church. Do we make it a subject of thankfulness to Almighty God that we have been made members of "the one Catholic and Apostolic Church?" Do we live according to the rules of our Church, attending her services devoutly and constantly? Are we in our daily lives as humble, obedient, and self-denying as our Church teaches all her members to be?

Friday after the First Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THEN the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.—Acts viii. 29—31.

ST. PHILIP is sent on a fresh mission. As he had gathered in the firstfruits of Samaria, so also must he gather in the firstfruits of Ethiopia. An Ethiopian eunuch of high place and authority in his own country had gone up "to Jerusalem for to worship." As he returned he made diligent use of his time reading the Jewish Scriptures. He finds them difficult to understand. He longs to know more of them; more of the God Who gave them; more of Him of Whom they spoke. God ever blesses the diligent prayerful study of His Word. He does so here in an especial manner. He sends an authorised teacher to explain and unfold the mysterious words of Isaiah. We, too, have authorised teachers; men who have been called of God and moved by His Spirit, and sent to teach and to preach the living Word of God. Do we address ourselves to them and consult them when any religious difficulty presents itself to our minds? St. Philip begins at the passage which the Ethiopian was reading, and showed him to Whom the words referred, and then "preached unto him Jesus." Doubtless in his preaching he speaks to him of the Sacrament ordained by Christ Himself as the means whereby we are admitted into His holy Church. For when "they came unto a certain water," the Ethiopian desires to be baptized. He desires to enter into covenant with the Christ Who for him had suffered. He believed in Him, and made a full confession of his faith. He is willing henceforth to forsake sin, to renounce the world, and to conquer Satan. He would serve Him Whom he had learned to love. Have we resolved to serve God? Do we keep in mind the privileges of our Baptism? Are we grateful for them? Do we study God's Word to learn more of Him and His great love for us?

Saturday after the First Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THE next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world. This is He of Whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for He was before me.—St. John i. 29, 30.

IN the words "Behold the Lamb of God," we have an answer to the question addressed by Isaac to his father: "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" The sacrifice of Isaac on "the mount of God" was a foreshadowing mystery which in the "fulness of time" was to have its consummation and fulfilment in the sacrifice of Christ on the selfsame spot. Even Abraham seems to have gained an insight into the purposes of Grace, his eyes being opened by the Spirit of God to behold the "day of Christ" in the transactions of that eventful morning on Mount Moriah. God may have vouchsafed to reveal to His servant the typical value of that which he had done. To this our Lord may have referred when He said, "Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it, and was glad." We, however, who look back upon the memorable past, have a more certain knowledge. We cannot fail to see the many striking points of resemblance between the sacrificial death of the Redeemer of the world and this typical offering of Isaac. We see that as the sacrifice of Isaac was ordained,—God ordering it and Abraham obeying,—so the sacrifice of Christ was ordained before the world began. Again, Isaac submitted to be bound; he might have resisted, and successfully resisted, but he submits; so Jesus Christ said that no man could take His life from Him; He laid it down of Himself; His was a willing sacrifice. Again, there was mystery in both,—mystery in the command to Abraham, mystery in the reason of the sacrifice. So of the sacrifice of Christ it was said, "Great is the mystery of godliness." But now all mystery is swept away, and we see in Jesus, the true "Lamb of God," the fulfilment of types and prophecies, "the Lamb (of whom every sacrifice was a shadow) which taketh away the sin of the world."

The Second Sunday after the Epiphany.

LET love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another: not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you; bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one towards another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate.—Romans xii. 9—16.

THE apostle here instructs us how we should walk as members of the body of Christ. If we would be true members we must not think too highly of ourselves, for every member in his vocation and ministry has received gifts from God, all differing one from another, but all tending to the glory of God. They who seem to men to be endowed with the most lowly gifts, may in the sight of God be much esteemed. Everyone has received some gift, some talent from God, and should serve God to the best of his ability according to the grace given to him. Next we are taught by a number of apostolical warnings to let our daily conversation and conduct be such as becometh those who are all-brethren in the Lord Jesus Christ. At the head of these stands the exhortation, "Let love be without dissimulation." Let not your love be that of the hypocrite; let it not be false, but truthful, upright, sincere. It must be a discriminating love; we must "in honour prefer one another." It must be a love showing itself in deeds, not words; we must be helpful to our brethren; and in helping them we are told we are serving the Lord. As with love, so with hope; it must be fervent, it must be strong. Such hope will manifest itself in our lives, making us happy and joyous. We are warned we cannot do all this in our own strength; we must therefore continue instant in prayer, praying for help, for grace, for a more abundant outpouring of His Spirit, that we may be able to do those things that are pleasing to Him and useful to our brethren.

Monday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THERE was a certain man in Cæsarea called Cornelius, a centurion of the band called the Italian band, a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway. He saw in a vision evidently about the ninth hour of the day an angel of God coming in to him, and saying unto him, Cornelius. And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, Lord? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.—Acts x. 1—6.

THE history of the conversion of Cornelius teaches us that God always rewards those who diligently seek Him. Cornelius was a worshipper of the true God; he had given up his idols. So far as he knew it, he tried to do the Will of God. He feared God himself, and taught his household and the soldiers who waited upon him to fear God. His religion was not barren, it produced good fruit. He "gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always." Thus he did what he could, while he waited for, and earnestly desired more light. See how God rewards him. Though he was a Gentile, yet God hears his prayer and accepts his alms. He had offered them to God, and they had come up as "a memorial before" Him. They reminded Him as it were of his existence and wants. He had made good use of the grace bestowed upon him; God will give him more grace. He therefore sends His angel to instruct him what next he should do. In obedience to the angel's instructions he sends for St. Peter, who at the same time was being instructed by a vision as to the admission of Gentiles into the Church. If we desire light, we must pray for it. Prayer is the act by which we reach out our hand to God to find Him, and to have our wants supplied by Him. Deeds of mercy must accompany our prayers. They are evidences of faith. Both together will ascend as a memorial unto God. He will hear and answer.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

WHILE Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues, and magnify God. Then answered Peter, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized, which have received the Holy Ghost as well as we? And he commanded them to be baptized in the Name of the Lord.—Acts x. 44—48.

WHEN St. Peter came to Cæsarea, he found that Cornelius (anxious to bring others to a knowledge of the true God by which he had so much benefited) had brought together many friends to hear him. He preaches Christ to them, ably setting forth the leading points in His life, and the doctrines which all believers should know and understand. While he was speaking, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the word." They of the circumcision were astonished that "on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost." God chooses this way of proving to Jew and Gentile that henceforth there should be no difference between them. The middle wall of partition which was necessary under the old dispensation, was broken down when Christ died for the sins of the whole world. All alike might now be cleansed in the blood of Jesus, and therefore no one should be called common or unclean. God was no respecter of persons; why should man be so? It mattered not what nationality a man might be of, if he feared God and worked righteousness God would accept him. If God accepts, who is man, that he should reject? St. Peter then commands that Cornelius and his company should be admitted by baptism into the privileges of the Christian Church. What a lesson we are taught of the brotherhood of all men. If brethren, then should we treat each other as brethren. We should, "as the elect of God, put on bowels of mercies, kindness, meekness, forbearing one another, forgiving one another even as Christ has forgiven us."

AND Herod was highly displeased with them of Tyre and Sidon: but they came with one accord to him, and, having made Blastus the king's chamberlain their friend, desired peace; because their country was nourished by the king's country. And upon a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat upon his throne, and made an oration unto them. And the people gave a shout, saying, It is the voice of a god, and not of a man. And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, because he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost.—Acts xii. 20—23.

HOW insigaificant does earth's greatness appear to him who is lying on a bed of sickness waiting for his final call. Herod had all that this world could give him. He had worldly possessions, worldly rank, and worldly pleasures in abundance. The thought of death he put far from him; it was fear and torment to him. In the height of his prosperity, when the voice of his people led him almost to believe that he was a god, the "angel of the Lord smote him." Of what avail then was all his worldly greatness? Vain was the help of man; vain the flattery of his courtiers and sycophants; vain the gold and silver he possessed in such abundance. Let us desire detachment from the things of earth. We were sent into this world to serve God, and not our own lusts; to please Him, and not ourselves; and to prepare for another and a better life, and not make this our home. When we read, or hear of death being busy in our neighbourhood, let not the warning be lost on us. Death is certain. Each evening as it closes in brings us a day's march nearer to it. Are we preparing for our final call? Are we laying up treasures in heaven, where we may find them again when this period of existence is over? The treasures of earth we shall have to relinquish; are we trying to detach ourselves from them now? We shall have nothing to fear, but everything to hope for, if we so order our lives as to be able to say with St. Paul, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Thursday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND Jacob went out from Beer-sheba, and went toward Haran. And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep. And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac.—Genesis xxviii. 10—13.

WHAT Jacob here saw in a dream and in a vision, has in Christ become a truth and a reality. The Son of God has come from heaven to earth, and having joined in His own Person the divine and human natures, has reconciled man to God, and is become a mediator for time and for eternity. Thus He is a heavenly ladder for us and for all humanity. Other ladders there are, some made of wood, some of iron; but this alone can reach to the heavens, and this alone can be injured by nothing. Rust cannot eat it away; fire cannot scorch or melt it; nor can any earthquake shake its foundations. There is no other ladder by which we may ascend to heaven, for there is only one Mediator between God and man, only one Advocate with the Father, only one Name whereby we can be saved. What a wonderful ladder! It can bear all; no one can say that it is not for him; all may climb, all may find the true gate of heaven. Wherever Christ is, wherever angels are ascending and descending, ministering "for those who shall be heirs of salvation," wherever the word of promise is heard and believed, there is the ladder, and there is "the gate of heaven." Let us with boldness grasp the ladder, and ascend without fear step by step; first the step of repentance, then of faith, then of obedience, then of love; climbing ever higher and higher, till at length a hand be reached down from heaven to take us within the veil, to be for ever with the Lord.

Friday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.—Evening.

WHEN Paul and his company had gone through the isle unto Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew, whose name was Bar-jesus: which was with the deputy of the country, Sergius Paulus, a prudent man; who called for Barnabas and Saul, and desired to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so is his name by interpretation) withstood them, seeking to turn away the deputy from the faith.—Acts xiii. 6—8.

THE Apostles Barnabas and Paul set out on their first missionary journey. They were solemnly set apart for the work by the Church at Antioch. The Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. As the Head of the Church He sends forth His agents to complete the conquest of the evil one. Each soul won to Christ diminishes the power and influence of Satan. The souls of men are the prizes in the warfare between the powers of light and darkness. Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor of Cyprus, was a good man, and desired to know the truth. Elymas, who was an agent of Satan fighting Satan's battles, tried to lead him away from the truth. But a stronger than Satan comes into the field. The apostles are sent to fight Christ's battle. Their weapons are not carnal, but mighty to pull down strongholds. The prize is worth fighting for, it is an immortal soul. St. Paul uses the powers given to him. He strikes Elymas blind for a season. The miracle was a miracle of mercy. St. Paul could not but remember how he was struck blind for a season himself, and the influence for good it had; and doubtless he hoped and prayed that the mist and darkness which fell on Elymas would lead him to repentance. It was a miracle of mercy in another way. It gained the victory, and saved the soul of the Roman governor. The same warfare is still going on between the powers of light and darkness. We may all fight on Christ's side if we will. All who try to draw men from sin towards what is right are Christ's agents. All who offer their own souls as a sacrifice to Christ are helping in the work.

Saturday after the Second Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

JACOB said, O God of my father Abraham, the Lord which saidst unto me, Return unto thy country, and I will deal well with thee: I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which Thou hast shewed unto Thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan; and now I am become two bands.—Genesis xxxii. 9, 10.

SO spake Jacob, and so also must we speak. Many are the mercies we have received from the gracious hand of our God. Under His protecting arm we have lived in peace and security; we have seen many evils turn aside; we have food and clothing; and yet we are not worthy the least of all these blessings. How little, how imperfect is the good we have done; how much have we left undone. Even in this new year, some weeks of which have already passed over us, have we done all that we ought to have done? What we have done, is it not imperfect, and wanting in many respects? With shame we must ever confess that we are worthy of stripes rather than mercies; for we know our Lord's will, but we do it not. Yet the Lord has been gracious unto His servants. Every good thought, every effort to do right, every opportunity to benefit our fellow beings, has been His gift. But for one gift above all others we have to thank and praise His Holy Name, even the gift of His dear Son. In Him alone can we have hopes of acceptance. To Him we can tell our wants, and plead His riches. We can tell Him of our guilt, and plead His precious blood and righteousness. We can tell Him of our weakness and unworthiness, and plead His strength. God loves to hear His people thus confessing and pleading. He has pleasure in seeing the hearts of His people adhering to Him. Do our hearts adhere to Him? Are our feelings of love towards God equal to those which we have towards our earthly friends? Do we take more pleasure in seeking to please Him than in engaging in earthly amusements? Such questions as these let us put seriously to ourselves and be honest with our own hearts in answering them.

The Third Sunday after the Epiphany.

BE not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath.—Romans xii. 16—19.

THE Epistle for to-day is, as it were, a mirror in which we may see ourselves. It also shows us how we ought to walk in the presence of our brethren. It speaks to us first of humility. We must not be "wise in our own conceits." It is a necessary warning in these days—a warning which we cannot with safety leave unuttered. It is a prevalent fault to fancy that we are wise; and this wisdom in our own conceits makes us think more highly of ourselves than we ought. Oh, that these warning words of the apostle may have been heard this day by willing ears, and have made a deep impression on prepared hearts! Out of humility grows peace. It was through the Son of God humbling Himself, and taking upon Him the human form, that peace was established between heaven and earth. If we work in the spirit of Christ, striving to be of the same mind, humbling ourselves as He humbled Himself, then peace will be the result. Every true Christian should strive to be a child of peace. He, and he alone, understands the word, "as much as in you lieth be at peace with all men." Peace is perfected in love for our enemies. The bitterest enmity ought not to disturb the peace which the Prince of Peace has planted in the heart. If people become our enemies, that is no reason why we should become their enemies. The Jews were enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ; but He did not therefore become their enemy. The prayer, "Father, forgive them," was uttered on behalf of Pilate and Caiaphas, as well as for the whole world. We must not avenge ourselves; yea, not only so, we must do acts of kindness to our enemy, and thus overcome the evil which he has in him, and which he displays towards us, by our good. We win thus the victory over evil, and often gain friends out of enemies.

Monday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

WE also are men of like passions with you, and preach unto you that ye should turn from these vanities unto the living God, which made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all things that are therein: Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways. Nevertheless He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.—Acts xiv. 15—17.

THERE was a certain man at Lystra impotent in his feet—he had never walked. Though without bodily strength, he had a hidden power within. He had faith. St. Paul, who had the supernatural gift of discerning spirits, knew that this man possessed faith sufficient to be healed. He speaks to him in a loud voice, saying, "Stand upright on thy feet." See the effect of the miracle on the simple country people: they thought the gods were come down in human form. The priest of Jupiter organised a grand thanksgiving service, and brought forward oxen and garlands to the gates of the little town. We cannot help admiring the simple earnestness of these people. They believed in their gods. They had not as yet been taught a higher or nobler faith. So far as they were instructed, they were anxious to do their duty. They desired to please their gods, and were ready to give of their best to them. Are we as devoted to the service of our God? Are we willing and ready to give of our best to Him? Are we willing to sacrifice self, and our own convenience, for the glory of our Creator? These Lycaonians did what they could. They lived up to the light they possessed. God now grants them more light. Hitherto He had made Himself known to them through the works of Nature, now He sends His apostles to bid them turn from vanities to serve the living God. Are we making use of the light which we possess? If so, God will assuredly give us more light. Are we using the grace which He has given to us? He will give us more grace—grace to be diligent in prayer, liberal in deeds of mercy, and zealous in His service.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

BEING brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, declaring the conversion of the Gentiles: and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the church, and of the apostles and elders, and they declared all things that God had done with them.—Acts xv. 3, 4.

ST. PAUL returns to Antioch from his first missionary journey. He had fulfilled the work for which he had been set apart. Soon, however, a new peril arises from the Judaising party, and he is sent up to Jerusalem. He gathers the Church together, and rehearses "all things that God had done with them," and how He had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles. What perils he went through! Perils from his own countrymen, perils from the heathen, perils from robbers. Yes, the apostles met with perils enough to terrify even the boldest hearts. They had to go through much tribulation, but their light affliction was but for a brief time, and it would work out an eternal weight of glory. Missionaries in many countries run much the same risks now. How many of our noblest missionaries have perished amid the perils of travelling! How many have suffered at the hands of the heathen! How much pain and tribulation many suffer on account of the evil lives of their own countrymen! Do we think of the perils of the missionaries? Do we think of them in their loneliness? Do we think of the smileless life they for the most part live? Do we consider how shut out they are from all intercourse with those who can understand and sympathise with them? Do we pray to God on their behalf? Let us remember in our prayers the great mission cause. Let us thank God for giving courage to those who are gone forth to make known the glad tidings to the heathen. Let us pray to Him to give them an increase of faith, and more patience and endurance. Let us pray that the Church at home may be endued with more of a missionary spirit, that the means for carrying on the work may be always forthcoming, and that earnest men may ever be found willing to devote themselves to the work.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AFTER they were come to Mysia, they assayed to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not. And they passing by Mysia came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them.—Acts xvi. 7—10.

THE Holy Spirit guided St. Paul and his company to Europe. He would not suffer them to preach the Word in Asia, nor to go into Bithynia, but guided them on to the large seaport town of Troas. Here a vision appeared to the apostle. A man of Macedonia stood beside him in the night, and prayed him to come over and help the nations of the West. St. Paul recognises the hand of God in thus restraining and guiding. He and his company, together with St. Luke, who here joins him, take passage in a ship sailing into Macedonia, anxious to become God's helpers, carrying help to the heathen. The man of Macedonia represents all the heathen. They all want help. They want knowledge and guidance. They want the way of life to be pointed out to them. They want grace, to walk in that way when pointed out. God reads the thoughts of His creatures. Though man may not hear their cry, or perceive their inward longings, God does. The very perplexity of their thoughts is a proof that they long for help. Their wise ones were continually engaged working out answers to the great problems—as to the meaning of death, the immortality of the soul, the nature of life in the shadowy world beyond the grave. They were terribly in earnest; and their earnestness was a proof of their desire for help. The heathen want peace and salvation; how shall they know how to find either without a preacher? How shall men preach unless they be sent? The cry of the heathen rings in our ears. Are we doing anything to ensure an answer? Let us have compassion on the multitude, and aid in sending them the help they need.

Thursday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND the keeper of the prison awaking out of his sleep, and seeing the prison doors open, he drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm, for we are all here. Then he called for a light, and sprang in, and came trembling, and fell down before Paul and Silas, and brought them out, and said, Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.—Acts xvi. 27—31.

THE cry of the Roman jailor in the prison at Philippi is the cry of myriads of souls groping in the darkness for peace and salvation: "What must I do to be saved?" Even the heathen sunk in darkness, misery, and sin, feels at times in his better moments a longing after a higher, nobler life. Nature without, conscience within, speak to him of a God, of another and better world, of rewards and punishments for good and evil deeds. How sad the condition of the heathen. No teachers to instruct them; no Word of God to comfort them; no ministers and stewards of God's mysteries to impart to them the Bread of life, as spiritual nourishment for their souls. From how many does even now the cry go up, "What must I do to be saved?" As we consider the condition of the heathen, do we not feel compassion for them? If the same mind be in us as in Christ Jesus we must feel compassion, we must earnestly desire to help in making known to them the reply of the apostle, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." He is man's only Saviour. Faith is the open door by which we come to Him. This is the message we have to send to the heathen. They need to be saved from sin, and the devices of Satan. Let them believe in Christ. Believe what Christ has done, and is doing for them. Let them seek His grace in the appointed means of grace and the sacraments which He ordained. Let them be diligent in doing deeds of mercy, and bringing forth the fruits of righteousness which Christ looks for and requires at our hands, and they shall be saved, for they shall be new creatures in Christ Jesus.

Friday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt were ended. And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread. Joseph's brethren came, and bowed down themselves before him with their faces to the earth. And Joseph knew his brethren, but they knew not him. —Genesis xli. 53, 54; xlii. 6, 8.

NATURE is a Word of God. The world around us is one grand volume of God's utterances of His thoughts. He speaks to us in all Nature's symbols, if only we will hear and understand. The Bible everywhere points to the things around us as full of deep meaning. The years of plenty and the years of famine in Egypt, when rightly understood, teach us that God's providential care of Joseph had a wider significance than merely to show mercy to an individual. It was meant to benefit Egypt, first in a temporal sense, by means of the useful laws made by Joseph, and also in a spiritual sense, by introducing the knowledge and worship of the true God. Joseph had made a good impression on Pharaoh and his court. It was evident his aspirations after holiness were sincere; his desire for communion with God intense. Thus the way was prepared for Jacob to enter Egypt, and bring with him his religion and the worship of God. It appears from Jacob's language that they had suffered much from the scarcity. Famine is a fearful calamity; yet it does not take place without God's permission. It is meant always to work out some final good. Troubles are often blessings in disguise. Through them God calls us. Through them He means to educate our spirits. Are we learning the lessons they teach? Do our sorrows make us more loving and gentle? As outer joys depart do we become more joyous inwardly? Let us well consider the depth of meaning in these inspired words, "All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous; yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness."

Saturday after the Third Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THEN Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, "To the unknown God." Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, Him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed any thing, seeing He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.—Acts xvii. 22—25.

ST. PAUL'S spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city of Athens wholly given to idolatry. Do we feel our spirits stirred within us when we read of the false gods, the statues, the idols of the heathen? Do we feel saddened at the thought of the many temples built to false gods, and the monstrous nature of their worship? If we do, we ought by our prayers, by our alms, by our sympathy, to do what we can to assist in making known to them the true God in Whom "we live, and move, and have our being." We ought to help in sending to them the loving message, by which God calls "all men, everywhere to repent." We ought to help in making known to them that the God Who thus calls is their Father, that He loves them, and is watching over them. He calls them to a higher, nobler, better life. They are no longer to live unto themselves, as the Epicureans, who were "lovers of pleasures," whose motto was "Eat, drink, enjoy thyself, the rest is nothing;" nor as the Stoics, who were proud, and despised others. They should live the higher life, loving God, Who is the disposer of all things, and will judge all men hereafter. Let us help to send this message to the heathen, and at the same time pray for them, that they may hear, and be converted. Let us pray in faith, satisfied that our prayers will be heard on their behalf. Our prayers will also have a reflux influence on ourselves; they will return into our own bosoms, like Noah's dove into the ark, bearing a message of peace, of comfort, and of benediction.

The Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany.

LET every soul be subject unto the higher powers; for there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil. Wilt thou then not be afraid of the power? do that which is good, and thou shalt have praise of the same: for he is the minister of God to thee for good.—Romans xiii. 1—4.

IT is as necessary now as in the Apostolic age to inculcate the duty of obedience to "the higher powers." By "the higher powers" we are to understand all in authority; from "the king as supreme," down through every grade of governor and magistrate who is set over other men by lawful authority. The duty of obeying these rests on the fact that "the powers that be are ordained of God;" in other words, we must "obey our rulers, because government is of divine appointment." It is the will of God that it should exist, and "those who exercise it should be obeyed within the sphere of their legitimate authority." We should regard every civil magistrate as clothed with divine authority; therefore "he that resisteth" disobeys God. His just punishment is here very plainly declared, "They that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment;" that is, they who disobey the power, or government ordained by God and founded on His will, sin against God, and He will inflict punishment on them. St. Paul thus places obedience on the highest grounds: not only is obedience, he says, enforced by penal statutes, it is a religious duty, "ye must needs be in subjection for conscience sake;" from the best, the purest motives, from a regard for God. Obedience to earthly powers is one of the ways in which God is educating our spirits. If we obey, for conscience sake, the earthly ruler, it will help us much in yielding a more perfect obedience to our Heavenly Ruler, and the peace which results from the former will help us to realise the blessedness which will result from yielding our wills altogether to the Will of our God.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

AND God spake unto Israel in the visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob. And he said, Here am I. And He said, I am God, the God of thy father: fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation: I will go down with thee into Egypt.—Genesis xlvi. 2—4.

HOW full of incidents, how full of changes and adventures was Jacob's life! He suffered much, but it was God's discipline; and such discipline was necessary. He had long and deeply mourned the loss of his favourite son, Joseph: he dreaded lest Benjamin too might be lost to him. But now comes the last great change in his life, a change altogether joyous, without one thought of bitterness in it. Joseph is alive, Benjamin restored, all anxiety about famine removed. "And Israel took his journey with all that he had;" that is, with manservants and maidservants, as well as children. It is probable that afterwards these home-born servants of Jacob were absorbed into the Hebrew nation, when all were reduced to a common lot of hard bondage by their tyrannical masters. This would account for the rapid growth and increase of the Israelites during the comparatively short time they were in Egypt. When contemplating so important a step as that of leaving Canaan, the aged Patriarch would doubtless ask counsel of God. God answered him in that place which had become memorable in the history of the Patriarchs as the place where God had been specially gracious unto them. Once again God appears in "the visions of the night," renews the covenant, and assures him He will be with him in Egypt as He had been with him throughout his whole life. Just as really, though not visibly, does our Lord and God appear to us; He owns us, loves us, speaks kindly to us. And just as Joseph brought his brethren into a place of safety and repose, so our spiritual Joseph, the Lord Jesus Christ, brings home all His brethren into His Father's house, around Himself in glory. Well, indeed, may every knee bow before Him, and every mouth confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father!

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

A CERTAIN man named Demetrius, a silversmith, which made silver shrines for Diana, brought no small gain unto the craftsmen; whom he called together and said, Sirs, ye know that by this craft we have our wealth. Moreover, ye see and hear, that not alone at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, this Paul hath persuaded and turned away much people, saying that they be no gods, which are made with hands: so that this our craft is in danger to be set at nought.—Acts xix. 24—27.

EVEN his enemies bear witness to the zeal and diligence of St. Paul in spreading abroad the news of the kingdom, the glad tidings of the Gospel. Demetrius says, he "persuaded and turned away much people" from the worship of Diana. He turned them from darkness to light. He, the great missionary to the Gentiles, wrested from Satan his strongholds, and spoiled him of his goods. It was selfishness that induced Demetrius to turn against St. Paul. He saw that if the apostle was suffered to preach unmolested, he would persuade all the people that idols made with hands were no gods. Then the hope of his gains would be gone; his craft by which he and his fellow-workmen gained their livelihood was in danger to be set at nought. He therefore raised a cry against St. Paul, not that he cared much for Diana, but feared lest his trade should suffer. Missionaries in our own times suffer from a similar danger. Those who gain their livelihoods by the false worship of idols—the heathen priests and officers of heathen temples—raise a similar cry against those who would bring a country from darkness to light. Little do we at home know of the perils and dangers of a missionary's life. They need a double portion of the Spirit of God. Do we remember them constantly in our prayers? Do we remember they are but weak men, and need special strength, faith, and courage to be given to them? Oh, that the members of the Church at home were more in earnest in helping the missionary work of the Church abroad! Oh, that we all had more zeal in advancing the Kingdom of God, overcoming every kind of evil, and treading down Satan under our feet!

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.—Acts xx. 7.

WE get a glimpse here into the church-life and customs of the early Christians. It was their habit to assemble together on the Lord's day,—the day in which the Redeemer arose from the dead; the day in which the Holy Spirit was poured out on the apostles at Jerusalem. As if to sanction the keeping holy of the first day of the week, our Lord appeared twice to His disciples on that day, when they were assembled for the purpose of worship. Thus from the very first it was set apart as a holy day, and specially dedicated to God as "the Lord's day." The early Christians came together on that day to "break bread;" that is, to obey the last command of their loving Master, "This do in remembrance of Me." They did not despise their Lord's dying injunction. Do we obey the Saviour's dying command? Have our communions been "in remembrance of His Death and Passion?" Do we feed upon Christ? Do we come to have our "souls strengthened and refreshed by the Body and Blood of Christ?" Let us consider well what fulness of grace may be received from duly obeying this dying command of our Saviour. Then St. Paul addresses the assembled disciples. In his zeal and earnestness he preaches until midnight; so sincerely did he long for the salvation of souls. Do we love the Lord's day and its services? If not, it must be because we are dead,—dead in sins, without any life in God. If we have true spiritual life we shall love the sanctuary of the Lord; we shall join with pleasure in its services, and seek constantly for more grace through the appointed means. Well for us if we have learned to love God's sanctuary, the house of His abode. Well for us if we prize her heavenly ways, her sweet communions, her solemn vows, her hymns of love and praise. May all these deepen the spiritual life within us, and raise our hopes of brighter bliss in heaven.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. And when they were come to him, he said unto them, Ye know, from the first day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons, serving the Lord with all humility of mind: and how I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly, and from house to house, testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.—Acts xx. 17—21.

ST. PAUL is journeying to Jerusalem. At each place where he stops he has warnings of coming trials. But he is not discouraged. He knows in Whom he has put his trust; and he knows that He has never yet failed him. He places his future with confidence in His hands. When he reaches Miletus he sends for the Ephesian elders. How glad they must have been to meet once again the beloved apostle who had laboured so long and anxiously amongst them. In the charge which he delivers to them he looks back and reviews the past, he looks forward and speaks of the future. It should be the constant practice of our lives frequently to review the past and look forward to the future. However busy we may be, we should take care to secure every evening some brief leisure to place ourselves before God and try to realise His Presence. Then review the incidents of the past day. We should thank God for having preserved us. We should examine ourselves as to how we conducted ourselves through the day; recalling where and with whom we have been, and what we have said and done. For anything good we may have done we should bless and praise God, giving Him all the glory. If, on the other hand, we have thought, or said, or done anything amiss, let us confess our faults with real sorrow to our Father in heaven. Then let us look forward to the coming day, let us make our plans as best we can, and ask God for strength and courage to carry them out to His glory, and pray for grace to serve Him better in the future than we have done in the past.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

THERE came down from Judæa a certain prophet, named Agabus. And when he was come unto us, he took Paul's girdle and bound his own hands and feet, and said, Thus saith the Holy Ghost, So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man that owneth this girdle, and shall deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles. And when we heard these things, both we, and they of that place, besought him not to go up to Jerusalem. Then Paul answered, I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus. And when he would not be persuaded, we ceased, saying, The Will of the Lord be done.—Acts xxi. 10—14.

ST. PAUL'S prospects as he drew near to Jerusalem were dark indeed. He knew not all that awaited him; but he knew that he would be bound and imprisoned. He was "ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus." What are we willing to give up for the Name of the Lord Jesus? It is not likely that we shall ever be called on to suffer bondage for the sake of our religion. We are, however, called on every day to do or to suffer something for Christ's sake. We are called on to obey God's commandments, even when these commands forbid what we think would give much pleasure. Are we ready to yield a willing obedience? If our consistent walking in the ways of God's laws brings down upon us the taunts and ridicule of those in whose company we chance to be thrown, are we willing to bear their reproaches rather than yield to their temptations or persuasions? "All that live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." Notwithstanding this, are we determined to continue to "live godly?" Are we willing to give up our own plans, to suffer some inconvenience, to deny ourselves, that we may advance the cause of Christ and of His kingdom? If we are, then we are following in the footsteps of St. Paul; nay, we are following in the footsteps of the Master Himself, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

THEN fled Moses at this saying, and was a stranger in the land of Madian, where he begat two sons. And when forty years were expired, there appeared to him in the wilderness of mount Sina an angel of the Lord in a flame of fire in a bush. When Moses saw it, he wondered at the sight: and as he drew near to behold it, the voice of the Lord came unto him, saying, I am the God of thy fathers, the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.—Acts vii. 29—32.

THE life of Moses is usually divided into three periods, each containing forty years. The first period he passed in Egypt; the second in the seclusion and simplicity of a pastoral life in Midian; the third in leading the children of Israel through the wilderness. Doubtless he learned much in the solitude of the rich valleys and wild mountain-passes of Midian. When fully trained, he receives from God his call to be a prophet and the deliverer of His people. The scene of the call was Horeb, the mountain of God; so called either from its great height, according to a well known Hebrew idiom, or from the religious feeling with which the neighbouring people regarded it, thinking it to be inhabited by the Deity. The burning thorn bush has ever been looked on as emblematical of the condition of Israel: persecuted, suffering, yet not consumed. It may also be considered prophetical of the continual state of God's Church in the world. Notwithstanding all her trials, God is in the midst of her, and her enemies shall not prevail. Moses turns to see the wonderful sight, and God speaks to him. He reveals Himself by a new Name. The "Almighty God," the Name by which He was formerly known, was not significant enough. He is now the "I AM," a Name expressive of the eternal self-existence of the one true God. This revelation of the eternal existence of God, and of His loving care for His people, must have been a tower of strength to Moses. It should also be a tower of strength to us. When troubles or trials assail, we can fly to Him for refuge. Oh, how blessed the thought that "the Almighty is a strong tower to all them that put their trust in Him!"

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany.

ABOVE all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.—Colossians iii. 14—17.

ALL members of the Christian Church have one common bond uniting them,—the bond of charity or love. They have one song of praise in which all can join,—a thanksgiving unto our God. They have a common work in which all can bear a hand,—the conquering of evil in the world. This great work must be begun and carried on in, and for the great Head of the Church. "Whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus." To be fitted for this work, the "Word of Christ" must dwell in us richly. It must dwell in our families, in our households, in our intercourse with our fellow men, in solitude and in society. We must derive spiritual nourishment from it, be guided in our actions by it, and be comforted in sorrow. If the Word of Christ dwells in us, then the peace of Christ will rule in our hearts; it will be always an Epiphany time. Christ is ever manifesting Himself to such. Where He manifests Himself there is peace, and there is blessedness. When the sun shines brightly in the early morning hours the air is fresh and invigorating, the birds sing the praises of their Creator, the flowers expand, the very grass looks bright and green, and the dewdrops sparkle with varied colours. It is a scene of beauty. Yet such a morning is but a faint image of the happy morning of the Christian life where the Sun of righteousness has arisen; where the dew of thankfulness reflects His image; and the praise of God resounds from many voices; and peace, the peace which Christ alone can give, rules in our hearts.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THE chief captain commanded him to be brought into the castle, and bade that he should be examined by scourgings; that he might know wherefore they cried so against him. And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman.—Acts xxii. 24—26.

BONDS and imprisonment for St. Paul were foretold. We see now the fulfilment of the prophecy. The chief captain desired to find out the truth why the people cried so against him. It was useless to ask the rulers of the Jews; for they were prejudiced. He gives orders to examine St. Paul himself by scourging. This was lawful, according to the strict letter of the Roman law, towards those who belonged to conquered nations; but not in the case of Romans. Therefore St. Paul claims exemption,—not that he is afraid to suffer; he was ready and willing to endure anything that would advance the Kingdom of Christ. But this could not in any way benefit the cause; therefore he speaks a terrible word which wrought an instant change. He claimed Roman citizenship. This is one of the many instances in which Roman law was invoked in aid of the Gospel. Straightway "they departed from him who should have examined him." But he is kept a prisoner. He is then brought before the Jewish Council; but though no crime could be laid to his charge, he had to be saved from mob violence by the Roman soldiers. That night a vision of tranquillity cheered the apostle. His Lord stood by him. He bids him be of good cheer, and tells him he must bear witness for Him in Rome also. These few words of his loving Lord upheld and comforted him in the "uncertainty of his life from the Jews; in the uncertainty of liberation from prison at Cæsarea; in the uncertainty of surviving the storm at Melita; in the uncertainty of his fate on arriving at Rome. So may one crumb of divine grace and help be multiplied to feed five thousand wants and anxieties."

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND Aaron stretched out his hand over the waters of Egypt; and the frogs came up, and covered the land of Egypt. Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the Lord, that He may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the Lord.—Exodus viii. 6, 8.

THE first plague, which, on account of its severity and the length of time it lasted, ought to have convinced Pharaoh that it was not mere accident, but caused by an Almighty power, had not the desired effect. Another, and yet another plague must be brought on Egypt. But before God strikes He remembers mercy. He sends His messenger to declare what He will do, if Pharaoh repent not. Since Pharaoh will not hear, the very river which he worshipped as a god is made the instrument of his destruction. Is not this a common experience? Do we not often see a man making an idol of some created thing, and then this very idol becoming his tormentor, sometimes even his ruin? The Almighty frequently makes our own sin the instrument of our punishment. Pharaoh is humbled; he bows before Moses, and implores him to intreat the Lord for him. How happy for Pharaoh; how happy for his country, if his repentance had been sincere. When, however, he saw there was a respite, he again hardens his heart. Once again must the rod be outstretched; once again a plague. Will Pharaoh never hear? So we ask in perplexity. We forget to look nearer home. Is Pharaoh the only one who hardens his heart? Does not God send His messengers now? Does He not call, and threaten, and execute judgments? And yet man hardens his heart, he will not hear, he will not understand. To every voice, whether the still small voice of mercy or the thunder of His wrath, man turns a deaf ear. The time may come when we shall call and God not hear. He Himself has warned us, "Because I have called, and ye refused, I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh."

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND Pharaoh sent, and called for Moses and Aaron, and said unto them, I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Intreat the Lord (for it is enough) that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer.—Exodus ix. 27, 28.

THE author of "The Christian Year" says, that it is "when storms are hurrying by" on the lofty mountain's summit that the soul owns the entire control of God over earth and sky. No one can face the storm when the mighty thunders are roaring around and the lightning flashing past his very eyes, but must feel that the great Creator is present, that it is His voice that is speaking. Even on the hardened heart of Pharaoh a momentary impression was made by the storm that devastated Egypt. He confesses his sin: "This time I have sinned; the Lord is righteous." The impression was fleeting. Moses well knew that it would be so. "I know," he says, "that ye will not yet fear the Lord God." We should beware of letting good impressions quickly fade. They are the strivings of the Spirit of God within us. He is urging us to do the thing that is right. Let us follow where He leads. Let us humble ourselves to confess our sin, and then be up and doing, lest the impression prove a transient feeling, and leave us, when it is past, worse than before. In time of danger we are very ready to make good resolutions; and then when the danger is past we forget them, or neglect to carry them out. Well for us if we remembered the old saying, "Hell is paved with good resolutions." Let us not only resolve, but carry out our resolutions; not in our own strength, but under the guidance, and with the aid of the Holy Spirit. Let us not only pray, but watch. The one is vain without the other. "To pray without watching is superstition; to watch without praying is presumption." Let us then watch and pray; and then our hearts, instead of being hardened like Pharaoh's, will be purified from every stain of sin, and become as prepared temples, meet for the in-dwelling of God the Holy Spirit.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

AND the Lord said unto Moses, Yet will I bring one plague more upon Pharaoh, and upon Egypt; afterwards he will let you go hence: when he shall let you go, he shall surely thrust you out hence altogether. Speak now in the ears of the people, and let every man borrow of his neighbour, and every woman of her neighbour, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold. And the Lord gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians.—Exodus xi. 1—3.

"YET one plague more," and then Pharaoh's probation here is at an end. The thick darkness had made an impression on him. Again he proposes a compromise, but refuses to submit himself entirely to God and yield a full obedience. When Moses continues firm, insisting on every portion of his demand, Pharaoh drives him from his presence, and bids him see his face no more. He may thus get rid of the messenger, but he cannot get rid of an avenging God. He may exclude Moses, but the Angel of God he cannot exclude. The last plague is announced in a most solemn manner. The Lord says, "About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt." The servant with his symbolical action stands aside. Jehovah Himself will stride through the hostile land in majesty, and strike terror into the hearts of all. The effect of the just judgment on the people is foretold. The proudest should be humbled, and all should bow before the Will of God. The futile effort of Pharaoh to resist the Will of God reminds us of the words of Gamaliel, "If this counsel or this work be of God, ye cannot overthrow it, lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." Pharaoh fought against God, and was completely overthrown and conquered. Let us take heed lest we too be found fighting in the ranks of God's enemies. Whenever we refuse to hear and obey the Word of God spoken or written, we are fighting against God; whenever we resist His grace, we are fighting against God; whenever we allow warnings to pass unheeded, we are fighting against God. With such an example before us, we are left without excuse. Let us humble ourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, and obey His Will, knowing that what He wills is best.

Friday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND it came to pass, that at midnight the Lord smote all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, from the firstborn of Pharaoh that sat on his throne unto the firstborn of the captive that was in the dungeon; and all the firstborn of cattle. And Pharaoh rose up in the night, he, and all his servants, and all the Egyptians; and there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not a house where there was not one dead.—Exodus xii. 29, 30.

WHEN Moses delivered the message of God to the people they bowed the head and worshipped, thus expressing their faith, homage, joy, and thankfulness. They had learned to trust God, and to know that what He said He could also bring to pass. At midnight a cry of despair was heard throughout Egypt. There was not a house in which there was not one dead, from the firstborn of Pharaoh to the firstborn of the captive; yea, the firstlings of the cattle were smitten. But the destroying Angel passed over the Israelites; the destroyer was not suffered to come into their houses. The king and his people were now urgent that the children of Israel should start immediately. They gave them as presents whatever they asked or required, that they might get rid of them the sooner. Thus they leave the country like a victorious army laden with the spoil. The Paschal Feast which had just been instituted, would, for generations to come, remind them of this great deliverance. Great indeed it was, for the beginning of the Hebrew nation dated from this deliverance. Up to this they were bondmen under a foreign tyrant; henceforth they were to be a free people with Jehovah as their King. Up to this they were living in a strange country, without any national rites to bind them together; henceforth they were to be a united people, a nation bound together by many bonds. Thus the Exodus may well be said to be the birthday of the nation, and the Passover the annual birthday feast. It was the yearly memorial of the dedication of the people to Him, Who had brought them out of darkness into light, and from being no people, had made them to be the people of God.

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a cloud, to lead them the way; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light; to go by day and night: He took not away the pillar of the cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.—Exodus xiii. 21, 22.

THE children of Israel as a nation leave Egypt for ever. By a series of the most tremendous miracles ever recorded God led them forth. He brought them out by a mighty hand; He humbled the pride of Pharaoh to the very dust, and showed Himself absolute and omnipotent King. All this was in fulfilment of His promise. Joseph prophesied that this should come to pass; "God," he said, "will surely visit you, and ye shall carry up my bones." His request is complied with; and Moses takes up his bones to bury them in the promised land—a proof of the integrity and thoughtfulness of the Israelites, and the power of tradition. A promise made centuries before, and sealed with an oath, abides still fresh in their memories and is faithfully kept. Slavery, it is well known, breaks the spirit, and changes courage into pusillanimity. So, lest Israel might be discouraged by the difficulties in the way and the dangers of the journey, God vouchsafes to lead and guide them by day by a pillar of cloud, by night by a pillar of fire, which flashed forward a light on their onward path. He dwelt in their camp as in a sanctuary, marking out by a broad clear track their daily journeys, and guarding them when they rested by the way. May we not see in the pillar of cloud and fire a type or figure of God's everliving presence in His Church? Does not He now shine on His people when they are in darkness? Does He not shelter them when distress is at hand? Does not the Lord now go before us in the way of our pilgrimage, and guard us till we arrive at our journey's end? Is not His Church even now a "tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime from the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and rain?"

The Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany.

BEHOLD, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in Him is no sin.—1 St. John iii. 1—5.

MUCH of the blessedness of heaven will consist in seeing Jesus our Saviour "as He is." Oh, how the apostles must have longed to see again the well-known, well-loved face of their Master Who was parted from them on the Mount of Olives, and Who, in the act of blessing, ascended; a cloud receiving Him out of their sight! What a burning desire must have filled their hearts to see Him again as they then saw Him. But not only the apostles who had seen Him with the bodily eye, but also all loving Christian souls in the first ages were filled with this same fervent longing. St. Peter, speaking to those who had not known Christ in the flesh, says, "whom having not seen ye love;" and this love made them long for "the appearing of Jesus Christ." We, too, shall "see Him as He is." See Him like the sun in the southern sky, one "unclouded blaze of living light." And we shall be like Him, "without fault before the throne," without sin. All the glory of the Divine image in which man was originally created, but which in this world is stained and blurred by sin, shall then be ours, undimmed, unclouded. We shall "behold His face in righteousness; we shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness." Do we realise this picture as we ought? Are we filled with this hope? If so, are we straining every nerve to grasp the prize? Are we doing all in our power to prepare ourselves? Let us never forget that if we have this hope we must "purify ourselves, even as He is pure."

Monday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

I AM the Lord: that is My name; and My glory will I not give to another, neither My praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth.—Isaiah xlii. 8—10.

IF we wish to "purify ourselves, even as" Christ "is pure," we must keep His commandments. The first and chiefest of all the commandments is, Thou shalt love and worship the Lord, and Him only shalt thou serve. Worship Him in the spirit of love; serve Him in a spirit of reverential fear. We fail in keeping this command if we neglect God; if we do not think of Him as we ought; if we do not give Him the service He requires; if we fail to give Him our hearts; if we despise the ordinances made for worshipping Him. Well for us if we consider well and examine ourselves whether in any of these ways we are neglecting to fulfil this first and great commandment. Do we ask why we should serve God? Because "He made us, and not we ourselves." He is our Creator; we owe Him all that we have, all that we are, yea, our very existence. The very object for which He made us is to worship Him. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth." If we fail to do this we miss the end for which we were created. We have yet another reason why we should worship and serve God. He has redeemed us; He has purchased us. We are not our own; we have been bought with a price. Therefore we ought to acknowledge God to be our Lord. If we do not do so, and this not only with our lips and understandings, but also with our hearts, we cannot possibly serve Him as we ought. Let us look within, and see whether our hearts are wholly given to God. Do we ascribe all the glory to Him? Do we absolutely refuse to give His praise to another, however dear that other may be? Do we "give glory unto the Lord and declare His praise" in the Church?

Tuesday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

AND when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, Who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created.—Revelation iv. 9—11.

THE true worship of God consists in adoring prayer and active service. By adoring prayer we mean the practical confession and acknowledgment that God is everything and we are nothing; that He is worthy to receive honour and glory because He has created all things, and because they exist and were created for His pleasure. When we pray, do we thus adore God? Are not our prayers oftentimes mere words, and nothing but words, meaning almost nothing? Or, on the other hand, if we are in earnest, is it not in order that we may gain from God some temporal advantage, some worldly good which may add to the happiness of our worldly existence? Oh, how unlike such prayers are to the blissful adoration of the saints and angels before the throne of God! We ought to strive after this truer spirit of adoration. We ought to throw a great deal more of a spirit of praise and thanksgiving into our prayers. Do we not owe a great debt of praise to God for what He is in Himself? Consider His "great glory," His infinite majesty, His marvellous attributes and perfections. Then let us consider all that we have to thank Him for. "Thou hast created" us. We have therefore to thank Him for our very existence. But existence apart from Him would be a curse, and not a blessing. "He has redeemed us." He has purchased us back to belong to Him. We are now His. We may live with Him for ever. Shall we not thank Him for these and all His other inestimable blessings? "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive" thanks, for Thou hast not only redeemed us, but also Thou hast given us Thy Holy Spirit to comfort us, and to be our guide along the road that leads to Thee and eternal blessedness.

Wednesday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

THESE are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them.—Revelation vii. 14—17.

THE true worship of God consists not only in prayer, praise, and thanksgiving, but also in active service. This active service must proceed from the truest and best feelings of our hearts. To serve God acceptably, we should cultivate those virtues so essential to true worship—faith, hope, love. Without these there can be no true service. We should also cultivate a spirit of submission; and this spirit of submission will evidence itself in active obedience. Are we cultivating this spirit of obedience? and do we actively serve God? Let us beware of doing "the work of the Lord deceitfully." Many do so without altogether intending it. Many defraud the Almighty of His due. They worship Him negligently, or refuse to give Him the obedience which belongs to Him, or they give it in a grudging spirit. Others, in the pride of their hearts and from a spirit of rebellion against God, say with Pharaoh, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice?" Others, again, from a spirit of sloth will not trouble themselves in the matter. Oh, that they, and we also, would follow the example of those who, in purified robes, "are before the throne of God!" Oh, that we served God "day and night!" True, it requires labour and diligence, time and self-denial. Do we not give all these willingly to gain some worldly object? What zeal and diligence, what labour and preparation, is required of those who serve an earthly captain to enable them to conquer an earthly foe, and gain a triumphant victory! Shall we show less zeal in, shall we spend less time in preparation for, the service of our great Captain, Who leads us on to a more glorious victory, and promises an eternal reward?

Thursday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

BRETHREN, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this; Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.—Galatians v. 13, 14.

THE first and great commandment is, Thou shalt love, worship, and serve the Lord; the second is like unto it, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." What this command means, is explained in our Church Catechism. We "should do to all men as we would they should do unto us." We should compel ourselves to wish well to all men. No matter how grievously one may have offended us; no matter how he may have tried to injure or slight us; we must desire, pray, yea, work if called on, for his real good,—his real good both in respect to body and soul, as regards time and eternity. We can then easily put to the test our willingness to obey this command to love our neighbour. Do we pray, not for his spiritual good only, but also for his temporal well-being? If we can do this with real earnestness it is quite evident there can be no hatred, no ill-will in our hearts. It is no easy matter to conquer the desire for revenge against one who has injured us; but we must do it for Christ's sake. The best way to overcome the feeling of hatred, and encourage kindly feelings towards those who have given us considerable provocation, is to think of them not as enemies, but as members of Christ. Then we shall not find it difficult to wish them good; we shall find it impossible to cease praying for them. They are members of the same body as ourselves, united to the same Head; how, then, can we hate them? If they are striving to live near to Christ, sustained and assisted by His grace, then, though they may have their faults, Christ loves them; and, because He loves them, we ought to love them. Or they are lost sheep wandering from the fold; if so, Christ is seeking them. If Christ pities them, we ought to pity them. All thought of personal dislike ought to be swallowed up in a great commiseration, and our hearts should be filled with an earnest desire to do them good.

Friday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.
Evening.

THEREFORE I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.—St. Mark xi. 24—26.

IF we desire to obey the command to "love our neighbour as ourselves," we must be ready and willing to forgive. A forgiving spirit is absolutely essential to salvation. Unless we forgive, our Father which is in heaven will not forgive us our trespasses. He can have no compassion on us "if we forgive not every one his brother from our hearts." How necessary then to forgive. There are two ways in which we must practise this virtue of forgiveness: first by forgiving offences at the moment they are committed, and also by bearing no malice in our hearts. If we were filled with a spirit of meekness we should always be ready to forgive. It is our pride that makes us desire to revenge the insult offered to us. Let us learn of our Lord, Who was "meek and lowly." Let us follow His example, and bear wrongs patiently. "When He was reviled, He reviled not again." But, again, we should bear no malice in our hearts. We should not cherish resentment. We should abandon all intention of revenging ourselves. Nay, we must go further still, we must try to "overcome evil with good." We must not, as St. Peter says, "render evil for evil, but contrariwise blessing." This is not easy; we shall find it difficult to put it into practice and carry it out in all its completeness. But we must do it if we would be true followers of the Christ. One thought here may help us. Let us consider what need we have to be forgiven both by our Father in heaven and our fellow-men here on earth. Our only hope for ourselves in the great day of judgement is that God will forgive us fully, completely, indulgently. If we hope for forgiveness, we must forgive. If we bear this in mind we shall not fail in brotherly love.

Saturday after the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany. Evening.

GODLINESS with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil. —1 St. Timothy vi. 6—10.

IF we wish to do our duty towards our neighbour, we must learn to look with an unenvious, uncovetous eye upon those things which he possesses. The best way to do this is to cultivate a thankful spirit; and this we may do by considering the many and great blessings which God has bestowed upon us. Let us also consider our own unworthiness, that we deserve nothing at His hands. If we thus cultivated a grateful, contented spirit, we could not possibly entertain in our hearts envious thoughts or angry revengeful thoughts against our neighbour. Envy is a vice which makes men hate their neighbour, either because of some personal advantages, or because they are superior in talents or possessions. Where envy reigns supreme, all love for our neighbour is banished. Covetousness is another form of this vice. A covetous man is never happy; he is ever wretched and discontented. Oh, let us beware of covetousness; let us guard against the first beginnings of it in our hearts; let us compel ourselves to rejoice at the prosperity of others, and grieve over their losses or failures! If we be covetous, then no matter what our possessions may be, there will be something of our neighbours which we shall desire. We shall always be wanting more, and this desire for more will prevent us enjoying what we have. Thus we make ourselves unhappy, and render it doubly difficult to "love our neighbour as ourselves." God grant us grace to keep the two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets. May we have grace to love and reverence Him, and to love all men in Him. May we have grace to pray to Him, to praise and thank Him, and to serve Him obediently; and may we seek to please our neighbour unto his edification.

The Sunday called Septuagesima, or the Third Sunday before Lent.

KNOW ye not, that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things: now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.—1 Corinthians ix. 24—27.

ST. PAUL compares the Christian life to a race. To the Corinthians this would be a familiar image, the great athletic games being celebrated near their town. Just as the runner in the race prepares himself beforehand, and uses all diligence when in the lists to keep the goal in view and win the prize, contending lawfully: so the Christian should keep in view the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. But, alas, how many when they draw near the end of life confess they did not fully recognise the earnestness of life; they did not understand the value of the prize they would lose or gain! How many wish, if it were possible, to live their life over again! How many say, Let me become a child once more; give me back the seventy years, I will make better use of them this time; I will keep the goal in view; I will use all the powers of body and soul; I will "stretch forward to the things that are before;" I will press on for the prize! All such prayers are vain; we cannot live our life over again. This, however, we can do: we can take warning from those who have gone before; we can listen to their regrets. We can learn much by watching carefully wherein they have succeeded, and wherein they have failed. We can use well what remains to us still of life, and gather up all our energies to make up for past loss of time and opportunities, and so continue to the end of our course. The prize is only for those who reach the goal. Only to those who abide in the lists even unto the end, faithful even unto death, will the Lord give the crown of life. Let us "so run that we may obtain."

PAUL, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which He had promised afore by His prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power: by Whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for His Name: among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ.—Romans i. 1—6.

WHAT higher, what more blessed name can be given to the faithful than that by which they are here named, "the called of Jesus Christ?" The world may think little of such a title. The world may despise those who bear it. But it is not always those whom the world calls great who are great in the sight of God. It is not always those whom the world honours who are honourable before God. God sees not as man sees. God chooses the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. The world sees no fitness in the choice of God. But the Gospel tells us that those who are "the called of Jesus Christ" now, shall reign hereafter. The same power that raised Jesus Christ from the dead raises us here from the death of sin to a life of righteousness, and will raise us hereafter to a life of holiness and blessedness. Only by God's power can we become "the called of Jesus Christ." We must believe in that power. We must believe all that has been revealed concerning "Jesus Christ our Lord, Which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power." If we do not believe, all is vain so far as we are concerned. If we have no faith, we are not "the called of Jesus Christ." If we believe the truths of the Gospel, what we believe becomes the power of God to raise us from a life of sin, and give us all the privileges of "the called of Jesus Christ" here, and impart the gifts He won for us; and hereafter we shall enter upon the inheritance reserved for those who are called and sanctified.

THINKEST thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; Who will render to every man according to his deeds.—Romans ii. 3—6.

THE Jews trusted for their salvation in the fact that they were descended from Abraham. St. Paul's object is to take away from them this ground of confidence, and to prove that now in Christ Jesus there is no difference between Jew or Greek, that God is no respecter of persons, but that all will be judged alike, "according to their deeds." It was true that God was rich in goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering towards the Jews. This, however, was to lead them to repentance. It was no evidence that He would ultimately spare them. If they despised His goodness and mercy they would aggravate their condemnation, and treasure up wrath for themselves in the day of wrath. The ground of judgment for Jew or Gentile alike is his works. We shall be judged according to our works; not according to our professions, or feelings. The number and value of our privileges, if abused, will aggravate our guilt and increase our punishment. No amount of privileges will, in themselves, save us. Our privileges as members of Christ's Church are bestowed upon us to enable us to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality. If our privileges teach us, and enable us to be constant in the performance of good works, we shall receive the still higher gift, eternal life. If, on the contrary, we disobey the truth and obey unrighteousness, we earn our wages, "indignation, wrath, tribulation, and anguish upon every soul of man, whether Jew or Gentile that doeth evil." May God grant that His goodness may lead us to repentance, and that we may continue patiently bringing forth good works, remembering always that "the end of Divine knowledge is the fruit of a holy life."

BEHOLD, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest His will; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the Name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you. —Romans ii. 17—19, 21—24.

THE Jews boasted of their privileges; they were the covenant people of God. They boasted of their great superiority to all Gentile nations; they knew God's Will; they were acquainted with Divine things. They made this their ground of confidence that God could not reject them; He must treat them with favour. The apostle had already told them that God would judge all men according to their works, not according to their privileges. If then they do wickedly, if they steal, and commit adultery, and commit sacrilege, no matter what their privileges, no matter how earnest they may be in making converts, no matter how diligent in preaching, they shall assuredly be condemned, and their condemnation would be severe according to the greatness of the privileges they had abused and despised. When reading these and similar passages let us not think only of the Jews. Let us look within, and ask ourselves how we have profited by the many and great privileges into which we were introduced at our baptism, and which are ours now as members of Christ's Church. Have we the true circumcision of the heart in the Spirit, whose praise is not of men, but of God? Are we careful to act up to our profession? Do we constantly, and with patience, perform those things which we know and which we tell others ought to be done? Do we not merely avoid the grosser sins of the flesh, but hate even the appearance of evil? And do we "seek," with all the fervour of hearts given to God and His service, for "glory, honour, and immortality?"

WHAT advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That Thou mightest be justified in Thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged.—Romans iii. 1—4.

ST. PAUL has proved that Jews and Gentiles alike shall be judged according to their works. An objector interposes the question, "What advantage then hath the Jew?" They have many advantages. They were the guardians of the oracles of God; to them had been given a Divine revelation. Privileges are of great value. It is a blessed thing to know the will of God, to have the guidance of His Holy Spirit, to have the light of His Word shining on our path. Yes, there is much profit every way in possessing the privileges of the chosen people of God. If we use our privileges, grace will be given to us; as we use the grace thus given, we shall become capable of receiving more grace. Thus we shall go on from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue, increasing in the knowledge of God and in good works; and we shall receive our reward. Who can estimate what that reward shall be? But if, notwithstanding our privileges, we refuse to believe, then God, notwithstanding His promises, must condemn; for all His promises are conditional. If we believe and obey, He will be our God, and we shall be His people. If, however, we are unfaithful to our part of the covenant, God remains faithful; but the covenant is of none effect. We have by our sin caused the covenant to be broken. Let us beware of being unfaithful to the promise and vow made for us at our baptism, and which we ratified by our own act in confirmation. If we remain true to our part, God is faithful, His promises shall be fulfilled. Here He will give us more grace, and in the end bestow upon us the gift of eternal life.

WHAT shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.—Romans iv. 1—8.

ST. PAUL has already told us that we shall be judged by our works; but works to be pleasing in the sight of God must proceed from faith. "Without faith it is impossible to please" God. Without faith the tree of our spiritual life dies. Without faith any works we may produce are but dead works. Faith is the root, good works the fruit, of the spiritual tree. If the root is dead, the tree is dead. Oh, how important is faith! We live through faith. Faith keeps us in a continual state of vigour and activity. With a living faith at the root of our spiritual life we cannot help bringing forth good fruit. It is no cause of praise, no matter for boasting. The law of faith excludes boasting. If we have faith in God, our "iniquities are forgiven, our sins are covered." We are blessed with the blessedness of the man to whom sin is not imputed. Help is given to us from on high. The Holy Spirit works within us, sanctifying us wholly, and strengthening us to do those things which are pleasing in the sight of God. Our reward is of grace. It is a free gift. There is no room therefore for any boasting before God; no room for an assertion of self-righteousness. Let such thoughts keep us humble before our Creator, and may they make us desire more sincerely an increase of faith.

AS by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.—Romans v. 18—21.

SIN is indeed a heavy yoke: it is a weariness, a bondage. The offence of one brought us into this bondage. Man may, if he wishes, be free. The Christ's obedience has made him free. It is our own wilfulness that keeps us slaves. This slavery may develop into our eternal ruin unless we burst our bonds, and pray for grace. Sin reigns unto death; grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. By one man, the first Adam, sin entered into the world; it reigns unto death. Death passed upon all, because through his offence all became sinners. By one man, the second Adam, grace was bestowed; it reigns unto eternal life. What a contrast—death and life! Shall we not choose life? Is it then a matter of choice altogether in our power? Oh, how frequently does God exclaim, "therefore choose life, that thou mayest live!" God would not bid us choose if it were not in our power to do so. Jesus Christ has won for us the power; and if we desire it and pray for it He will give us the will. Let us not refuse the proffered gift; let us not thrust aside the hand that holds it out to us. He whose portion death is, chooses it for himself, in spite of offered mercy and grace. Oh, let us never doubt the power of Christ's death to procure for us eternal life. We are baptized into His death, we have risen again with Him; therefore His life is in us. If we suffer Him to do so, He will nourish that life so long as we are in this world with His Body and Blood; He will preserve it until it be developed into the eternal life of His everlasting kingdom.

The Sunday called Sexagesima, or the Second Sunday before Lent.

I SPEAK as concerning reproach, as though we had been weak: howbeit, whereinsoever any is bold, (I speak foolishly,) I am bold also. Are they Hebrews? so am I. Are they Israelites? so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so am I. Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more.—2 Corinthians xi. 21—23.

WHEN the Apostle Paul came to Corinth, he preached to the Jews first, testifying that Jesus was the Christ. When these opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he turned to the Gentiles. Amongst these he had a large measure of success. To strengthen His apostle, the Lord tells him in a vision that he has "much people in that city." For a time it appeared as if all the Corinthians, who ran with such diligence in the lists for a perishable crown, would now run in another and worthier race for an unfading crown. But, alas! it proved otherwise. The Holy Spirit guides St. Paul into other cities to preach the word of Christ. Scarce has he turned his back on Corinth when false teachers enter in, saying that none can be saved but those who keep the whole Jewish law. These cast suspicion on the teaching of St. Paul, who preached the perfect freedom of all Christians from the yoke of the old law. They tried to persuade the people that he was no true apostle. Thus arose those sad divisions in the Corinthian Church; and, instead of leading a quiet life in all godliness and honesty, the believers in Corinth became embittered one against another, true love and charity were forgotten, and all discipline rendered vain. It is this sad state of the Corinthian Church as reported to the apostle, that caused St. Paul to burst forth with the noble defence of himself which we read in the Epistle for to-day. He proves his apostleship by showing them that they are the fruits of that apostleship. But he will not glory. He is unwilling to boast, though he has cause for doing so more than others. He glories in his infirmities. His delight is to glory in the Lord, Who can bring strength out of weakness. He confesses his powerlessness, and ascribes all the praise and glory to God.

NOW if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him: knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him. For in that He died, He died unto sin once: but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.—Romans vi. 8—13.

WHEN we were baptized, we were baptized into the death of Jesus Christ. We are therefore dead with Christ. Our old man was crucified with Him. We died with Him to sin. But "if we be dead with Christ," if we are so closely united to Him as to have died with Him, the necessary result will be that we "shall live with Him." We shall live here in newness of life, in a life of holiness devoted to His service; and hereafter in renewed life, a life of glorious immortality. When the Christ died, He died unto sin once. He died on account of sin; for the destruction of sin. We who are united to Christ must not let sin reign in our mortal bodies. If we do, we are defeating Christ's work so far as concerns us. Christ died that we might be able to die to sin. If we die to sin, we live a renewed life. Christ died, and rose again. The life He lives, He lives unto God. We must rise again. We died to sin; we must rise unto holiness. The life we live, we should devote to God. We must not only be partakers of the death of Christ, but also of His life. What a practical conclusion the apostle draws from all this, "Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies;" "Do not yield your members instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God." Have we devoted our renewed lives to God and His service? Do we act and think and speak as those who are partakers of the life of Christ?

FOR I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.—Romans vii. 22—25.

THERE is a constant inward struggle continually going forward in the hearts of all men who are baptized into Christ Jesus, and in close union with Him. Their flesh, that is, the old nature, is not quite subdued; nor can it ever be so, so long as we are in the body. In the old nature dwelleth no good thing. That which remains of our old nature is ever dragging us down. The new man which we have put on is in constant conflict with the old nature. The new man wills that which is right; but so strong is the enemy that we find it difficult to carry out our resolutions and act up to our desires. We have to fight for every inch of ground we gain. At times even we find we are beaten back, and compelled for a brief moment to retreat. We long for the higher spiritual life, for a deeper love for God, for more earnestness and zeal; but, instead, we find "another law in our members warring against" these spiritual longings and earnest desires. This conflict between the flesh and the spirit is severe; but each day the flesh ought to become weaker and weaker, and the spirit stronger and stronger. We fight under the banner of Jesus Christ: so long as we acknowledge Him as our Captain and follow where He leads we must prevail. The conflict must end in the triumph of grace. Each victory gained over the flesh should be a cause of thankfulness and renewed effort. We should "thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord," and gird up our loins to be prepared for the next onset of the enemy. We should pray for more strength and courage, that in each conflict we may be victorious, and in the end finally triumph.

THERE is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.—Romans viii. 1—4.

ST. PAUL having in the chapters preceding declared the plan of salvation, in this chapter speaks of the blessedness of those who are united to Christ Jesus. There is for them no condemnation. Their iniquities are forgiven, their sins covered. To them belongs the blessedness of those to whom "the Lord will not impute sin." Even though they may be conscious of two different laws,—the one tending to good, and approving of the law of God; the other thwarting every good feeling, striving to bring them under the dominion of sin,—yet, being baptized into Christ, and made members of His Body, they are saved from condemnation; for they "walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit." The reason why there is no condemnation is, that Jesus Christ, by His life of obedience and His death in the flesh, has freed us from the curse of law and the bondage of sin. We are no longer under the dominion of sin. Our old nature indeed, with its tendency to evil, still remains; but it need not, and ought not to have dominion over us. We can and ought now, in the strength which Christ gives us, conquer sin, and gain daily victories over the enemy. By the gracious help of the Holy Spirit we may always seek and desire spiritual things, and realise that state of holy living which the law of God enjoins. Shall we not, then, gladly yield ourselves to the guidance of God's Holy Spirit? Shall we not pray that He may so renew and purify our whole nature, that we may win a complete victory over sin and Satan, and live as true sons of God?

WE are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.—Romans viii. 24—26.

SALVATION in all its fulness is not ours as yet. It is still in the future, and therefore a matter of hope. At our baptism we were introduced into the state of salvation. Salvation in its actual and final fruition cannot be obtained at once. We are heirs; but we have not as yet entered into our inheritance. An earnest has been given to us, an earnest of more hereafter. The rest we hope for, and "with patience wait for it." "We are saved by hope." We have the earnest in possession; but salvation in all its fulness is still in the future, and therefore a matter of hope. This hope gives us comfort and support until the time when we shall enter upon the actual enjoyment. If this hope be strong within us, we shall wait with patience, we shall endure seeing by faith things that are invisible. We shall think lightly of afflictions, for we look forward to the glory that shall be revealed in us. Our weakness may be considerable, our infirmities many and difficult to bear; but the Spirit, during all this time of hope and patient waiting, helpeth us. He relieves us where the burden presses most sorely upon us. He fits our crosses to us that they may not be too heavy for us to bear. He intercedes as an advocate with us, dictating to us what we ought to say, exciting in us earnest desires, and filling us with intense longings, and praying for us in words too deep and fervent for language to express. He that searcheth the hearts knows what is the mind of the Spirit, and will make all things work for good to those in whom the Spirit makes intercession, and who suffer their affections to be so influenced by the mind of the Spirit as to be completely absorbed in love and adoration of God.

I SAY the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, Who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.—Rom. ix. 1—5.

BEFORE entering on the question of the calling of the Gentiles and the rejection of the Jews, St. Paul expresses his earnest love for his nation. In a heroic spirit of self-devotion, equalled only by that of Moses, he gives expression to a desire that he might be treated as "anathema," a thing accursed, for the sake of his countrymen. His love for the Jews as his own kindred was increased by the memory of their many and peculiar privileges. They were very dear in God's sight; they were His peculiar people. They were highly blessed, for God gave them His law, He established His covenant with them. The great inheritance of the nation was the evangelical promise of Christ and His kingdom. According to this promise Christ came, and He is over all, God blessed for ever. How could St. Paul help loving and respecting his nation which was so highly blessed? How it must have pained and distressed him to have to declare that this nation, once so highly privileged, God had rejected! He rejected them as a nation; but all who believed and were baptized should become members of a people chosen and called of God, whose privileges are still higher and more spiritual than those of the ancient people of God. We owe a debt of gratitude to the Jewish nation. Through them we have received a knowledge of the truth. How can we repay this debt, save by earnestly praying to Him Who, when the Jews were cut off, didst gather to Himself an universal Church to raise up children of faith from their posterity, that they may be received into His kingdom through Him Who is their God and our God, blessed for ever. Amen.

FOR Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.—Romans x. 4—6, 8, 9.

THERE is a great difference between the law and the gospel: between the works of the law and faith in Christ. The law says, "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written therein." Faith says, "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness." Through the law comes the knowledge of sin; through faith, forgiveness of sin. The law sets before us blessing and cursing; Jesus Christ takes away the curse, and leaves only the blessing. The law commands us to be holy; faith, by uniting us to Christ wins for us the power to become holy in the sight of God. The law was but for a time, it was transitory; it was meant to lead us on to something better. "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Both the law and the Gospel are gifts of God. The law was necessary to lead to Christ. Christ is the fulfilment of the law. It is vain now to think of becoming righteous by clinging to the law. Righteousness is offered to them who believe. Let us put our faith in Christ, and accept the righteousness which God offers through Him. This was what St. Paul so earnestly desired that the Jews, his kinsmen, should do. But, stiffnecked as they ever were, they refused to "submit themselves unto the righteousness of God, and went about to establish their own righteousness." Therefore God rejected them as a nation. Oh, how earnestly should we pray that the Jewish people may even yet put their faith in Christ, and be baptized into the Church of God; that they may be numbered amongst those "whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles."

The Sunday called Quinquagesima, or the next Sunday before Lent.

THOUGH I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.—1 Corinthians xiii. 1—3.

IT is commonly said that true charity is waning every day. It is remarked that a spirit of separation and disunion is taking its place. We live indeed in an age remarkable for noble gifts. With the tongues of men and angels God is praised. We have deep thinkers, eloquent preachers, men of the deeds of faith. We send forth missions to heathen and Jew. We have institutions for the amelioration of suffering, and the restoration of the erring and fallen. But with all this there is much self-seeking and self-pleasing. Each seeks his own glory: there is much sounding brass and many clanging cymbals. But love, which ought to be at the foundation of all works, making of many but one work; love which completes and crowns every building, where is it? And yet without love our gifts are vain; they are transitory. Just as we cannot take youth with us into manhood and old age, so all knowledge and work which is but for the present life must be left behind on the threshold of eternity. Into eternity enters that alone which love completes and crowns. Are our hearts filled with love? Are our works for our fellow-men undertaken and carried out in the spirit of true charity? Well for us if our contemplation of the characteristics of love fills us with an intense desire to love God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves. We know that all our doings without charity or love are nothing worth; how earnestly then should we pray that the Holy Spirit would pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, that we may indeed live in the sight of God, and not, while we live, be counted as dead before Him!

BUT into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing. But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own Blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.—Hebrews ix. 7, 8, 11, 12.

ONCE in each year, on the great Day of Atonement, the high priest entered into the holiest of holies. Before he entered he made atonement for himself and his house; then he took a censer full of burning coals from the altar, drew it within the veil, and sprinkled the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of incense might cover the mercy seat. He then took the blood of the bullock, and sprinkled it with his finger upon the mercy seat eastward; and before the mercy seat seven times. All this was but a picture, an image, a type of the one great sacrifice. Our High Priest entered in once into the holiest place, through His own blood, and "obtained eternal redemption for us." His great sacrifice was for all times; and we can now lift hopeful eyes of love to heaven, "whither, as a forerunner, Jesus entered for us, having become a High Priest for ever." His burning love is the living coal taken from the altar. His intercession is the cloud of incense covering the mercy seat; and the blood sprinkled is His own Blood, with which He entered within the veil. Thus He is to us just what we want, a Brother Who is holy, undefiled, radiant in perfect beauty, lustrous with the light of constant communion with God, and yet a Priest Who can offer the sacrifice for us, and bring God very near to us. For all men alike the good news is true. We have "a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God." He has "obtained eternal redemption for us.",

ALSO in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath. And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days.—Leviticus xxiii. 39, 40.

ONE of the three great festivals at which the children of Israel were expected to present themselves was the Feast of Tabernacles, a memorial of the booths in which the Israelites dwelt during their passage through the wilderness. This festival fell in the Autumn, when the later harvest—the fruit, the wine, and the oil—were gathered in, and is therefore mentioned in Deuteronomy as a thanksgiving for harvest. Hence, for two reasons, it was a time of joy and rejoicing. They rejoiced for the harvest, but they rejoiced still more for the fulfilment of God's promise in the settlement of His people in the Holy Land, and for the rest and blessing of a settled abode. Do we make it a subject of perpetual thanksgiving to God that we have the great blessing of a quiet and settled dwelling-place? Do we thank God as we ought for the regular opportunities which He gives us to cultivate the ground, and store up the corn and other fruits of the soil, by which the prosperity of the nation is promoted? Do we continually praise His holy Name that He has put far from us the fear of want and famine? If our hearts were more filled with gratitude, we should be more willing to admit our immediate dependence on God for food, shelter, and protection. There was yet another blessing for which at this feast they returned thanks to God: that is, the establishment of a central spot for the national worship in the temple at Jerusalem. Surely we too have reason to thank God that in every parish we have our settled place of worship, in which we may offer up our prayers and thanksgivings, and ascribe unto our Father in heaven the honour due unto His Name.

Ash-Wednesday.

WHEN ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret.—St. Matthew vi. 16—18.

IN the Sermon on the Mount, fasting is spoken of exactly in the same terms as almsgiving and prayer, as an acknowledged religious duty. It is well therefore to understand what fasting means. There are many who, without knowing why, don't like the word; they have a prejudice against it. How necessary then to grasp its true meaning. In this, the Gospel for to-day helps. We see that, according to the teaching of our Saviour, fasting has a much deeper meaning than taking little or no food. Many do this just to be noticed by men, and to win their praise. Such fasting could win no blessing from God. The true way to fast is to use such abstinence as may subdue the flesh to the spirit, to deny ourselves luxuries in order to be able to help those in want, to refuse even lawful indulgences that we may have to give to those who have not the necessaries of life; and, instead of spending our time in a round of pleasures, to devote it to duty and to labours of love, to be ready to sacrifice self that we may rescue the fallen and alleviate suffering. The second lesson for this day gives us still further insight into the true meaning of the word. The disciples of our Lord could not fast because He, the Bridegroom, was with them. "But the days will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days." They would then lay aside rejoicing because their hearts should be filled with sadness. In times of sorrow, in times of distress, in troublous times, Christians will be thoughtful, silent, prayerful. They cannot but mourn when all around is sad. They must "weep with them that weep." On the other hand, in times of joy and gladness they will be filled with joy, and "rejoice with them that do rejoice."

SEEING then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.—Hebrews iv. 14—16.

AS the laws and ordinances of the tabernacle were types and prophecies of things to come, so also was Aaron a type of our High Priest, Jesus the Son of God. But oh, what a difference! The one had to make an atonement for his own sins; the other, though in all points tempted, was "without sin." Our great High Priest was tempted like as we are; not once, but often; not in one place, but in many places—in the wilderness, in Jerusalem, in Galilee. Not at one time only, but all through His earthly course. He was tempted "like as we are;" that is, in every way in which man can be tempted—tempted through the flesh, tempted by the world, tempted by the great enemy of man. He was tempted in Gethsemane to doubt; on the Cross to despair: "yet without sin." His holy Soul consented not for one instant to the temptation. With the living Word of God, which is "sharper than any two-edged sword," He hurled the tempter back, and compelled the great enemy of God and man to fly. But why was the Saviour thus tempted? That He might be our High Priest; that He might be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities;" that He might have compassion on our weakness. Having been tempted in all points like as we are, there is no necessity of soul, no depth of inward sorrow or striving, in which His experience is not at home. If no mortal man understands us, He does; for He knows all. No trouble can come to us which He has not shared; no thorn pierce us which has not caused His heart to bleed. Yes; He knows all. He knows our weakness, our temptations, our trials; and He feels for us. We may therefore draw near with boldness, certain that we shall "obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

NONE of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be Lord both of the dead and living. But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God.—Romans xiv. 7—12.

WHEN we "stand before the judgment seat of Christ," what account shall we be able to give of ourselves, our deeds, our motives, during these years of our life on earth? "Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." We must give an account not only of great sins, but even of every idle word, every unholy desire, every impure thought. Our very motives will then be taken into account; our intentions will be weighed in the balance. What, if we should be found wanting? At that great day the sentence will be pronounced. What shall it be for each of us? Many who now seem first shall then be last. Many things which now appear sweet and pleasant shall then be known to be bitter and worthless. God is keeping a record of all that we do or think; we know not how soon the record will be closed. When closed, the sentence, which now hangs over us, shall fall. It is as unavoidable as death. Do we think of these things, or do we put them away from us impatiently? Let us remember the solemn words, "We must give an account." Are we living as those who must give an account? Are we living unto the Lord? Are we aiming to be now what we should wish to be found at the last great day of judgment? Let us listen to God's voice calling, and seek His grace while it may be found. Let us now, while we are able, make sure that death shall not overtake us when unready and unfit "to stand before the judgment seat of Christ."

AND Moses brought Aaron and his sons, and washed them with water. And he put the breastplate upon him: also he put in the breastplate the Urim and the Thummim. And he put the mitre upon his head; also upon the mitre, even upon his forefront, did he put the golden plate, the holy crown; as the Lord commanded Moses.—Leviticus viii. 6, 8, 9.

THE whole tribe of Levi was consecrated to the service of God, and formed the lowest order of the Jewish ministry. "The sons of Aaron, the priests," formed the next order above the Levites, holding a middle place between them and the high priest. Their dedication involved a yet higher consecration than that of the Levites. The sacrifices offered indicated two great truths: first, they who intercede for others should themselves be reconciled; and, again, their lives should be entirely surrendered to the service upon which they enter. Moses himself, as the representative of God, was the consecrator. When dedicated, they entered upon their work, which was to teach the children of Israel the statutes of the Lord: therefore "the priests' lips should keep knowledge." They were to bless the people at their solemn meetings; to be mediators on behalf of those who were striving to attain the higher standard of a life devoted to God; and, assisted by the Levites, they were to offer continually the burnt offerings unto the Lord. As God, from the time that He brought Israel out of Egypt, set apart specially chosen men to perform the sacred offices of the ministry; so now, under His guidance, the Church calls, tries, and examines men, that being approved they may execute the functions of the order to which they are called. There are three orders of ministers in Christ's Church—bishops, priests, and deacons. Their work is a holy, a sacred work; but it is a work of much difficulty, and has often to be undertaken amidst many trials. The Lord's people must be taught and admonished; Christ's sheep sought out and fed; the wandering brought home to the fold; and the lambs instructed into the ways of the Lord. We should remember those who thus work amongst us. We should pray for them, and implore God's blessing on their work.

The First Sunday in Lent.

WE then, as workers together with Him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain.—2 Corinthians vi. 1.

THERE is a day of grace for congregations as well as for individuals. The time that St. Paul preached the Gospel in Corinth was a "day of salvation" for the Corinthians. "Receive not the grace of God in vain," cries the apostle; for "now is the acceptable time." To give additional force to his warning, he proves to the Corinthians that he had not given them any occasion of stumbling. In every thing he had commended himself as a minister of God. He had been proved in many trials and sufferings which he had borne for Christ. Yea, Christ Himself had impressed His seal, inasmuch as He had preserved His servant in the midst of all his dangers. Thus St. Paul is no contradiction to the truths he teaches. He is an example of the power of Christ's Gospel to save; and therefore they have no excuse who receive in vain the Gospel of grace which he taught, and of whose saving power he is so blessed an example. We have no excuse if the Gospel of the grace of God in Christ Jesus is for us "in vain." Even though those who make it known to us cannot commend themselves with such lofty words as St. Paul, still the Church which teaches this "wholesome doctrine" through its ministers has the seal of God. We are therefore without excuse if we do not accept the truth as it is in Jesus. During this Lenten season there is one portion of that Gospel which we are especially called on to contemplate. According to ancient custom, we commemorate during these weeks the sufferings of our Saviour. This is truly an "acceptable time," a "day of salvation." Surely this season cannot be for us "in vain," before whose very eyes day by day "Jesus Christ is openly set forth crucified," and to whom His holy reconciliation work is again and again declared. Once again we hear the warning voice, "We beseech you on behalf of Christ be ye reconciled to God." May God grant that this day of salvation pass not away unused. God grant that we receive not His grace "in vain."

I BESEECH you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple. For your obedience is come abroad unto all men. I am glad therefore on your behalf: but yet I would have you wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil. And the God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. Amen.—Romans xvi. 17—20.

ST. PAUL, like his Master, looked forward to the Church being one united body. He earnestly longed for union and peace to exist within it, and deprecated disunion. More than once he enjoins upon those Churches to which he writes to have nothing to do with those who "cause divisions and offences." He had under his eyes the manifest evils which had been wrought in Corinth by those who, for their own purposes, had created divisions in the Church. He therefore bids the Roman Christians beware of them, and "avoid them." He knew well that they were not actuated by zeal for God's service, but worked for their own advantage and to bring about their own selfish ends. Their words were calculated to deceive. Their language sounds fair and plausible, but in truth was meant only "to deceive the simple." If St. Paul lived now, would he not have still greater cause for grief and misgivings? How sad to see Christ's Church rent by many divisions! How sad to see those setting themselves up as teachers who have not been called or sent, and who have in view only their own selfish ends and aims! They pretend to be acting on behalf of Christ, while they are only gratifying their own vanity. Let us listen to St. Paul as he warns us against all such. Let us do what we can to preserve the unity of the Church, that peace may reign within her borders. Let us ask the "God of peace" to "bruise Satan," that his agents and willing instruments may be completely defeated, and Christ Jesus reign supreme; and that His Church may be kept in unity, peace, and truth.

I BESEECH you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?—1 Corinthians i. 10—13.

THE triumphs of the Cross would be much more glorious if all true-hearted followers of the Crucified were joined together in perfect unity and peace. Our divisions injure the Church at home, and hinder our missions abroad. The evil began very early, and wrought much mischief even in the apostles' times. St. Paul frequently condemns divisions and schisms. When writing to the Roman Church he besought them to mark those who created the divisions, and avoid them. He is no less earnest in beseeching the Corinthians to avoid all that might tend to schism. Parties had already arisen in the Church of Corinth. They called themselves by the names of the teachers to whom they paid most respect. Some declared themselves disciples of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Peter. Some prided themselves so much on their fancied spirituality that they looked with contempt on the lawful authority of the apostles, and despised those who professed to follow their opinions. These called themselves the followers of Christ. St. Paul condemns all alike. He knew well that party-spirit would eat out the heart and life of religion in the Church. He tells them that under whatever name they separate themselves they are guilty of schism. He exhorts them to unity. Let us avoid all that tends to division in the Church. The "spirit of sectarianism" blights and cankers the truth itself. Let us suffer ourselves to be convinced of the evil of dissent by these earnest words of St. Paul; and let us abide true, earnest, active, living members of the holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

AND I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. And I was with you in weakness, and in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God.—1 Corinthians ii. 1—5.

THERE is a great difference between knowing and believing. We know that we are sinners; but do we believe it? We know that we cannot by any power of our own undo sin, or make ourselves holy; but do we believe it? We know that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; but do we believe it? If we did we could not remain inactive. We should be up and doing. We should watch,—that is, we should be ever living in a state of preparedness, with loins girded and lamps burning,—and we should pray; we should live in the spirit of prayer. St. Paul believed in the great truths he taught. It was with the knowledge of faith that he knew Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. He knew Him as the Saviour of the world. But he believed also that if he desired salvation he must not sit inactive. He must stretch forth his hand and grasp what Christ offers; he must confess Christ as his Master, and follow Him as his Example. This was the kind of knowledge he desired for the Corinthians. He did not wish their faith to stand in "the wisdom of men." Human learning and knowledge is not sufficient; their faith must stand in "the power of God." Our faith must be similarly grounded: we must not only know Christ with a head knowledge, but with a knowledge of the heart, with a true faith,—a faith which works by love, a faith which will enable us to follow in the footsteps of our Saviour. He is not only our Example, He is also our Guide and our Strength. He will lead us into all the truth about Himself, and give us the grace which will enable us continually to follow Him.

AND Moses said, Hereby ye shall know that the Lord hath sent me to do all these works. If these men die the common death of all men; then the Lord hath not sent me. But if the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit; then ye shall understand that these men have provoked the Lord.—Numbers xvi. 28—30.

MOSES prayed to God to interpose on behalf of His servant, and convince him that he had not trusted Him in vain. He demands a proof: "If the Lord make a new thing." God gives the proof he demands. More than once in the Bible a "new creation" is alluded to as a proof of God's power. As, for example, in Isaiah, He says, "I am the Lord;" and the proof He gives is, "New things do I declare." Again, in Jeremiah, "The Lord hath created a new thing on the earth;" and again, that Israel might "know the Lord," He says, "I will make a new covenant." But this "new thing" which Moses calls for is meant not only as a proof of God's power, but also as a means of punishment. The earth should "open her mouth and swallow up" the conspirators, and thus become at once their executioner and their grave. Israel should thus know they had to deal with a God that could avenge the innocent, and slay the guilty. "All Israel fled at the cry of them;" but their fear made no lasting impression: it did not lead them to "repentance and calling upon God," or to an absolute submission to His will. Let us beware how we offend God, and grieve His Holy Spirit. God is indeed a merciful God, but He is also just, and will not spare those who continue on in their wickedness. We may well fear before Him; but let not our fear be a mere passing feeling, having no permanent result. It should lead to repentance and confession of sin. If we confess our sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Whose advocacy is of far greater weight than that of Moses. For His sake our sins will be forgiven, our prayers heard, and grace bestowed. A loving God will then reward us if we use the grace and produce the fruits of holiness.

THESE things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written, that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? 1 Corinthians iv. 6, 7.

OUR Lord says that the Pharisees would not confess Him openly because "they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God." They could not even believe, because they desired "to receive honour one of another." Their pride made them fear the censure or the contempt of their companions. They wished to be well thought of, to be respected and esteemed. Thus their pride kept them from Christ. Well for us if we triumph over our pride, and cast aside self-esteem. It is pride makes men think more of themselves than they ought. It is pride that "puffs up one against another." Pride is an inordinate love of one's own powers and excellence. It makes us attempt things beyond our strength, and therefore often precedes a fall. It makes us seek the honours and high places of the world that we may receive the praises of men. How often are we warned by both prophets and evangelists against pride. And justly so; for pride induces men to spend their lives in vain-glory so as to be praised by their fellow-creatures, instead of spending them in the service of their Creator, desiring only the praise of God. St. Paul gives us a true antidote to pride. He bids us look within, and question ourselves. Even if we do differ from other men, even if we have superior talents, who makes us to differ? What have we that we have not received? If, then, all our talents and powers are gifts, why should we boast, and glory over our fellow-men as if we had not received it? If our gifts are many, let us use them in the service of the Giver, and thank and praise His holy Name. Let us use our talents not to raise ourselves above our fellows to gain their praise, but to raise them in the spiritual life that we may have praise of God.

AND the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that He take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live.—Numbers xxi. 6—8.

"THE soul of the people was much discouraged," because, instead of entering the land so long promised and so much desired, they seemed to be turning their backs in flight. They loathe also the "light bread." There was no fault in the manna. It was the "corn of heaven," "angel's food;" yet they loathe it. May we not see ourselves in this "just mirror?" Are we not often discouraged by the difficulties in our way to heaven? Do we not lightly esteem the Gospel, which is our food from above? Do we not often prefer to it the coarser food of the human intellect, the productions of the human brain? "The Lord sent fiery serpents among the people." When kindness fails to bring us to reason and repentance the Lord often lays a heavy hand upon us. Even this heavy hand is laid on us in kindness; His severe dealings are blessings in disguise. The severity of the punishment brought Israel to repentance: they confess their sins and implore mercy. Well for us if we suffer ourselves to be brought near to God by the severity of His just judgments. At God's command Moses provides a remedy for the wounded Israelites. We have our Lord's own divine testimony to the significance of the type, "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up." We all have been wounded more or less by the subtlety of the old serpent. We may have our wounds healed if we will but look to the Son of man lifted up upon the cross. All who behold with the eye of faith "shall not perish, but have eternal life."

The Second Sunday in Lent.

WE beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the Will of God, even your sanctification.—1 Thessalonians iv. 1—3.

AS in the Kingdom of Nature, so also in the Kingdom of Grace, nothing is at a stand-still. Either the powers of life or the powers of death are at work. Either we are being built up in our most holy faith, or we are decaying and mouldering away. There must be either growth or decay. This great truth of the spiritual life is frequently stated, and as frequently lost sight of. Every earnest Christian must be conscious of growth. Woe to him, who, on looking back, cannot see and feel that he has made some progress. We should know not only that we are on the road, but that we are advancing along it. There must be growth at all times in the spiritual life; but there are times when this growth is more apparent than at others. It is so in Nature. There are times in the year when the trees and plants grow and increase in one day more than they would at other times in a month. So in the spiritual life of Christians. There are times favourable to its growth which ought to be redeemed and used. There are such times both for individuals and also for the Church. The season we now are in is such a time. The Lenten season is for Christians not only "an acceptable time," it is also a time for special growth. How earnestly our Epistle draws our attention to this, when it warns us that we should "abound more and more" in pleasing God. It is for this purpose God "gives His Holy Spirit unto us," even for our sanctification. "We have no power of ourselves to" sanctify ourselves. It is God Who wills it, and calls us to it. It is His Spirit that works sanctification within us. Let our heartfelt prayer be, that He Who has made known His Will unto us may give us the spirit to understand it, and the power to accomplish it.

AND the Lord put a word in Balaam's mouth, and said, Return unto Balak, and thus thou shalt speak. How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied? For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations. Who can count the dust of Jacob, and the number of the fourth part of Israel? Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his!—Numbers xxiii. 5, 8—10.

BALAAM'S character is one of singular perplexity. It has been well said that "we observe here perfect veracity with utter want of truth; Balaam was veracious, he will not deceive Balak. Nothing was easier than to get the reward by muttering a spell, knowing all the while that it would not work." His conscience, however, will not let him do this. At heart indeed there was an utter want of truth; yet he does not dare to misrepresent or tamper with what he sees, the most tempting bribes cannot induce him to utter falsehood. He speaks to Balak the very words God puts in his mouth, knowing well that he was altogether blessing those whom he was called to curse. The blessing contains three distinct statements: first, the separation of Israel from the heathen; secondly, the rapid increase of the Israelites when they should dwell in their own land; and thirdly, a recognition of the righteous in Israel with whom he desired to die. All were realised in the literal Israel, and all are being realised in the spiritual Israel. The words of Balaam are being fulfilled in the rapid spread of the Gospel and the growth of the Church, in the deepening of the spiritual life in individuals, and the difference and distinction that exists between the followers of Christ and the followers of the world. Well for us if the spiritual life is daily being deepened within us. Well for us if our inward powers are being cleansed by the sanctifying Spirit. Well for us if we are living the life of the righteous; for then we have a good hope that we shall "die the death of the righteous," and that our "last end will be like his."

KNOW ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.—1 Corinthians v. 6—8.

WE should pray for grace to understand the mystery of the Cross. We should pray that the contemplation of the sufferings of the crucified One may fill us with deep gratitude and true sorrow for our sins. We should try to place ourselves in thought at the side of Christ on the night of His Passion, that we may learn what He then endured for us. He is "our Passover," and He was "sacrificed for us." We should try to bring home to our own hearts Christ's sufferings, that they may be melted into a fervent love, and offer unto Him our humble service in return for all His goodness. If our hearts are fired with a sincere devotion, if we feel the intensity of the love of Christ thus sacrificing Himself for us, what proof do we give of our devotion, what return are we making for His love? See what He requires of us. He demands that we should "purge out the old leaven," that we may gradually become conformed to His likeness. We should remember that to whose likeness we are conformed here, to the same shall we be conformed hereafter. If by purging out "the leaven of malice and wickedness" we grow into the likeness of the Son of God, He will raise us up in His likeness. If, however, we suffer ourselves to be thoroughly leavened by sin, we grow like Satan here, and we shall be raised like him hereafter. Let us take the apostle's warning, and purge out the old leaven. Let us renounce the ways and works of evil, and prepare ourselves to keep in sincerity and truth the approaching feast of Easter. If we deny ourselves now, and daily take up our cross in the imitation of Christ, He will acknowledge us in the last great day, and change the cross into the crown.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday in Lent. Evening.

KNOW ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.—1 Corinthians vi. 9—11.

AS St. Paul enumerates for us the sins which exclude from the Kingdom of God, do we look within and consider our past lives? Have we been guilty of any of those sins? Have we suffered idols to take the place in our hearts which God alone should occupy? Have we robbed God of the honour due unto His Name, or our fellow-man, by defrauding Him of that which was due unto Him? Have we ever given way to the temptation of strong drink? These are faults open and apparent; these are the "presumptuous sins" from which the Psalmist prays to be kept back. Have we also sinned in secret? Oh! let us consider the offensiveness of such sins in the sight of God, and the danger to our own souls, and pray with the Psalmist, "Cleanse thou me from my secret faults." Let us consider the patience and longsuffering of God, Who bears so long with us. He waits to be gracious. He rejoices to see the first sign of repentance. We owe a great, a countless debt to our God. Let us resolve to add no more to it. Let us come to Him, and ask Him to forgive us all we owe, to fill us with an intense sorrow for all our past sins, and to give us grace to amend our lives. Sins of daily infirmities, of ignorances, and forgetfulness we all fall into, and we need daily washing. But why should we, who have been bathed in the laver of regeneration, relapse into sin that will exclude us from the Kingdom of God? We have been bathed in the laver of regeneration: let us ask for daily washing, that we who "are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus" may be completely sanctified by the Spirit of our God.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT.—EVENING.

BUT this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.—1 Corinthians vii. 29—31.

UNWORLDLINESS is the chief thing taught in these words. We must not cling too closely to worldly connections or habits of life. We must not suffer ourselves to be brought into bondage by the fleeting things of this life, neither should we make idols of them, for "the fashion of this world passeth away." How quickly all things change around us! A few years, and those we have known and loved here are gone, and their place knoweth them no more. We are strangers on earth; pilgrims seeking a city yet to come. Do we live as pilgrims? Do we act as those whose home is not here, but above? Are we laying up treasures which we may have and enjoy when we reach our home? Let us remember that our time is short, that it is "as a very shadow that passeth away," and let us make the most of it. Let us sit as loose as possible to the joys and sorrows, the pleasures and business, of this world. If we have many afflictions, and much tribulation to bear, let us not squander the few days we have in vain weeping. If the "lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places," let us not be tempted to waste our time in pleasures and selfish amusements. Above all things, let us not spend our brief lives in vanity and sin. Let us use this world; use its innocent mirth and its hard work, its joys and its sorrows, its hardships and its pleasures; but let us not abuse it. However we may be engaged, let us frequently recall our thoughts with the words, "The fashion of this world passeth away." Then let us think how short the time, how few the years before we also shall have passed away; and, with an earnest prayer for help, let us continue our work with a chastened spirit.

AND the Lord spake unto me, saying, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward. For the Lord thy God hath blessed thee in all the works of thy hand: He knoweth thy walking through this great wilderness: these forty years the Lord thy God hath been with thee; thou hast lacked nothing.—Deuteronomy ii. 2, 3, 7.

WHEN the Israelites heard the awful sentence of forty years' wandering and death in the wilderness, they regretted their decision, and determined, notwithstanding God's command to the contrary, to go up against the Canaanites. They were driven back in disgrace, easily defeated, because God was not with them. So it is in our spiritual conflicts. If God be with us, we shall conquer, no matter what the number or power of our enemies; but if we enter on the conflict in our own strength, we shall fail. We should ever be ready to confess that we "have no power in ourselves to help ourselves;" then our God, seeing that we "put not our trust in any thing that we do," will mightily help and defend us. After their unsuccessful attempt the Israelites yield an unwilling obedience, and "compass mount Seir many days." During all this time God was mindful of them; "they lacked nothing." The goodness of God ought to have led them to repentance, and given them such a confidence in Jehovah that they ought never have doubted. So we think, as we read the history. But do not we daily experience the goodness of God? Is He not always pouring down blessings upon us? Is it not He Who gives us food and clothing, health and fruitful seasons? And above and beyond all these temporal blessings, is it not He Who gives us the hope of resurrection to eternal life? We "lack nothing." And yet how thankless we are; how ungrateful! If our hearts were right with God, we should never cease praising Him; not with our lips only, but in our lives. When therefore we are inclined to censure Israel for his unbelief and stiffneckedness, let us look within and see how we may amend, and return and serve our God, and become more thankful for all His benefits.

AND I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, Thine eyes have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto these two kings: so shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest. Ye shall not fear them: for the Lord your God He shall fight for you.—Deuteronomy iii. 21, 22.

ALREADY the Lord had destroyed two kings and two great nations. "So," Moses declares to Israel, "shall the Lord do unto all the kingdoms whither thou passest." It was God's Will that a pure religion should cast out the false; and a holy people supplant the old corrupt nations. How different the religion of the Israelites from that of the nations around! The children of Israel worshipped the one invisible God, under no form or similitude, but in His own pure essence. There was a complete absence of idols; whereas all around was idolatry. The people, sunk in ignorance and superstition, gave themselves up to the lowest forms of fanaticism; their very religion encouraging them in the most degraded sins. The religion of the Israelites, on the other hand, was a pure spiritual worship encouraging purity and holiness. They felt that their God was a reality, One whom they could trust, One whom they were taught to love with all their heart and mind and strength. How beautiful the confidence in God shown in the passage before us! "Ye shall not fear; the Lord your God shall fight for you." God was in their midst: they knew it; it inspired them with courage; it filled them with a certainty of victory, and a sense of superiority over their enemies. Would that we had more confidence in God; would that our faith in Him were stronger! Our religion would not then be a dead creed. It would animate us to contend victoriously against our enemies; it would make us sympathise with our brethren in their trials; it would teach us to help the weak, to raise the fallen, and to forward in every way in our power the cause of God and goodness in the world. May the Lord be with us at all times and in all seasons; and may a sense of His Presence increase our devotion for Him, and fill us with a holy zeal in His service.

The Third Sunday in Lent.

BE ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given Himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour. Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them. For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth.)—Ephesians v. 1, 2, 6—9.

THE warnings of the Epistle to-day are very similar to those in the Epistle for last Sunday; but the reasons, the motives given are different. There, the apostle gives as a motive to holiness, the "Will of God" concerning us; here, he exhorts to purity and holiness in similar language, but the motive is, "because Christ loved us, and gave Himself for us." It is as if He said, Love and gratitude ought to induce you to give yourselves to God, body, soul, and spirit, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God. Christ, through love for us, gave Himself up an offering and a sacrifice to God. We should therefore yield ourselves to Him. To do this acceptably we must avoid all appearance of evil, not only in our deeds, but also in our words. In our ordinary conversation we should have God before our eyes, and be mindful of His honour. We are children of the light, and therefore ought to walk as such. Walk according to the light which the Spirit of God has lit up in our hearts. Why should we "have fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness?" We have been brought out of darkness; we have the bright light shining around us: let us walk in it. How deep the apostle's words sink into, and lay bare our life and thoughts! How sharply he divides between light and darkness, between blessedness and condemnation! We should beware of glossing over the distinction between right and wrong, between darkness and light. We should ever reprove the works of darkness, and praise and rejoice in the works of light.

AND the Lord heard the voice of your words, when ye spake unto me; and the Lord said unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto thee: they have well said all that they have spoken. O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!—Deuteronomy v. 28, 29.

GOD pleads earnestly with Israel. He promises divine help if they will but walk in the way of His commandments. He never wearies in repeating over and over again the same promises, the same encouragements, the same warnings: "Keep My commandments, that it may be well with thee and thy children for ever." How much more cause have we to obey God, to love and fear Him! We know more of His love. We have deeper insight iuto His ways and counsels. We behold Him in the face of Jesus Christ, and have reason to confide in Him and trust Him. We know that we may bring everything to Him in prayer; that we may cast all our burdens, great and small, upon Him. Every event of our lives may raise us upwards to Him Who inhabits eternity. We may pray with confidence, because we plead in the Name of Jesus; we may triumph over Satan, because we meet him in the strength of God the Holy Spirit, and repel his every assault with the Word of Truth. In days of darkness we can still hold fast by God, and praise Him for His unfailing Word. Even from our very failures we learn lessons—lessons of humility and confidence. Weak in ourselves, strong in the Lord, we arise and sing the song of triumph: "Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, that we had more of this confidence in God! Oh, that we had more spiritual life, more faith in Christ, more heart-surrender! "Oh, that there were such an heart within us, that we might fear" the Lord, and "keep all His commandments always, that it might be well with us for ever!"

TUESDAY AFTER THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT.—EVENING.

BRETHREN, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.—1 Corinthians x. 1—6, 9.

WE are often warned not to tempt God; that is, to ask Him to do something against His law, or contrary to His Will. Israel tempted God, and called down His punishment upon them. Gideon tempted God in demanding signs, when he ought to have believed God and obeyed without gainsaying. It is tempting God when we do that which is not right in His sight,—when we make ourselves miserable through sin, and then desire to be saved from the consequences without any desire to amend. It is tempting God if we reckon on reaching heaven without making even an effort to "take heaven by violence," or to struggle into the narrow way, or to fight manfully to maintain each step gained. All kinds of hypocrisy is a tempting God. It consists in trying to deceive God, and under the mask of piety to slip into the Kingdom of Heaven. Hypocrisy is the worst kind of tempting God; sadder than superstition; worse even than unbelief. It mocks God, by crying, "Lord, Lord," but will not "do the Will of our Father in heaven." Hypocrisy brings its own punishment. God is not deceived. He sees through us, and divines all our thoughts; and even man in the long run finds out the hypocrite. Let us beware, then, of tempting God. Let all our works be done in simplicity and truth. Let us remember that even though we may conceal our thoughts and motives from man, all is open and manifest in the sight of our God with Whom we have to do.

I SPEAK as to wise men; judge ye what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the Blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the Body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.—1 Corinthians x. 15—17.

WHAT a depth of wisdom and love are exhibited in these words! They are beyond our finite capacities to understand them in all their fulness. God Himself provides a feast for us, and in that feast our deepest wants are supplied. If we really fathomed the depth of this mystery we should esteem the Holy Sacrament more highly. In partaking of it we become one with Christ and Christ with us. We are made partakers of the Divine Nature. Oh, what a proof of the boundless love of God! As we read these words, then, let us try to bring them home to ourselves by dwelling in thought on the death of our Redeemer on Calvary. The communion of the Body and Blood of Christ is the perpetual memorial of His sacred Passion. As often as we partake of this Holy Sacrament we "show the Lord's Death till He come." We make a memorial of it before God and man. Do we wish to have always "a thankful remembrance of Christ's Death?" "As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup," we are reminded of it. What loving consideration on the part of God for us weak men is shown in His giving us this commemoration of His Death! He knows well how forgetful we are. Unless He help us and strengthen our memory, we could not retain "a thankful remembrance of His Death." He therefore instituted "these holy mysteries as pledges of His love." They bring before us a memory of Christ's sufferings. They remind us of the enormity of sin. We are filled with contrition. We resolve for the future to hate and avoid sin. Thus we are drawn nearer to Christ. The cup of blessing is the "communion of the Blood of Christ;" the bread we break is "the communion of the Body of Christ."

THOU wilt say then, The branches were broken off, that I might be graffed in. Well; because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith. Be not highminded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, take heed lest He also spare not thee. Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.—Romans xi. 19—22.

HOW often Moses warned the children of Israel that if they obeyed not the commands of God they should be cut off! Again and again we read such words as these: "If thou do at all forget the Lord thy God, and walk after other gods, I testify against you this day that ye shall perish." These threatenings were fulfilled. The natural branches of the olive tree were cut off. They were cut off because of unbelief. "Behold then the goodness and severity of God." Both are necessary. In our state of imperfection, goodness without severity would in the long run lead to carelessness, frivolity, and wantonness. A time will come when we shall know nothing but the goodness of God; when His comforting words shall quicken the soul; when all fear and mistrust shall be banished, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Then there will be no need of severity; for our hearts being filled with the love of God, all the fruits of the Spirit will live and grow in us. But now we are in a state of imperfection; we are surrounded by enemies, we are travelling like the Israelites through a stranger's country; temptations await us on every side. The severity as well as the goodness of God is necessary to keep us in the right way. The thought of His severity guards us from sin and carelessness; the thought of His goodness guards us against mistrust and anxiety. The goodness of God becomes known and felt when the thunder-stroke of His severity and its lightning-flash have awakened us out of our sleep, and discovered to us the edge of the precipice beside which we were walking and dreaming of security. He places our cross on us, that we may win the crown. They who are cross-bearers here, shall be crown-wearers in heaven hereafter.

AS the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.—1 Corinthians xii. 12, 13.

BY one Spirit we are all baptised into one body. We are bound together as members of a vast spiritual family. God is "our Father;" Jesus Christ Himself, our Brother. We have all a claim to the same eternal inheritance, all share the same grace, all drink into one Spirit, all are fed with the same living bread. In such a body, in such a family, there should be no schism. The members should care one for another. They have all their various places and duties in the body. God has called us to the place we occupy, and distributed to us our duties. In the calling in which we have been called, let us therein abide, and do our duty towards God and our neighbour. Let us try to banish self-love, for it is the source of many evils. Its tendency is to blind us to our own imperfections, and to the perfections of our neighbour. There can be no real love for God, no true brotherly affection for our fellow-man, without the destruction of self-love. We must maintain continual war with it, for it is ever rising up in new shapes and forms. We must wage this war not in our own strength; we must place ourselves beneath the banner of Christ, and ask Him to fight for us and in us, while we strain every nerve to work together with Him. Our self-love is His enemy as well as ours. It causes disunion amongst the brethren; amongst those who ought to consider themselves one family, because brought under the influence of the one Divine Spirit, and members of the one Divine Body which has Christ for its Head. Disunion is a cause of infidelity at home, and of the slow spread of Christ's kingdom in heathen nations abroad. Thus our self-love hinders the work which Christ came to accomplish, and is therefore His enemy. Oh, let us earnestly pray for help against this enemy! Christ Himself will give us the strength utterly to crush and defeat the foe.

AND it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.—Deuteronomy xi. 13—15.

THE season of the year in which we now are—the season of Spring, the season for sowing the seed—reminds us that we ought to make this a time of special prayer to God to "bless the year with His goodness," and make the earth bring forth abundantly: for it is the Lord Who "gives the rain;" it is the Lord Who "sends the grass;" it is the Lord Who gives the harvest. We are too much inclined in the pride of our hearts to think that our own foresight and the labour of our hands are sufficient; that if we prepare the ground well, and choose good seed and sow it carefully, we must have an abundant harvest. We forget that we may sow, and also water, but that it is God Who gives the increase. The portion of Scripture we have now read connects intimately our obedience to God with the increase of our lands: "If ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments, I will give you the rain that thou mayest gather in thy corn." We should not neglect anything that may assist in bringing about a good harvest. We should work and labour, and use foresight and judgment. It is those who aid themselves that God aids. But also we should hearken diligently to what God commands, and pray to Him Who alone can give the rain, and cause the sun to shine and the grass to grow. Even they who may not themselves be closely connected with the tilling of the ground, even they should likewise pray for a blessing, that there may be sufficient food for the use of man; pray that God may be pleased "to give and preserve to our use the kindly fruits of the earth, so as in due time we may enjoy them."

HE also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.—St. Matthew xxv. 22, 23.

FAITHFULNESS in little things is of the utmost importance. "He that is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much." We do well to consider deeply what we call the little things of life. As, for example, little humiliations, which ought to point out to us when we fail; little denials of our wishes, which should teach us to hold ourselves still and wait; little hindrances, which should remind us that if we trust to our own powers we shall do nothing; little trials in our everyday life, which should make us practise patience. Now these are all fingers of God, pointing out the way; they are witnesses to His seeking, searching love. But how frequently they pass us by unobserved! We heed not the words they address to us; and the spiritual blessings they prepare for us we esteem not. And why? Because they are but little things. Again, reckon up the many divine emotions in our own breasts which we consider nothing but passing thoughts. Think of the warning voice of conscience, which is so often silenced by the distractions of life or the worry of business. Think of the holy inspirations warning us to avoid occasions of sin, and to lead better lives. Think of the many little opportunities of doing good which we suffer to pass by. And why? Because they seem so unimportant. Think of the many examples which meet us in others, but make no lasting impression on us. And why? Because they appear so insignificant. Think of all these things, and we must confess that we should have advanced further, much further, on the way to Life if we only observed carefully the way of God in little things, and listened with deeper attention to His voice in the ordinary affairs of our everyday lives, and to His wooing love under the veil of things indifferent.

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday in Lent. Evening.

AND the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his houshold, to give them their portion of meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. Of a truth, I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath.—St. Luke xii. 42—44.

OBSERVE and esteem little things. There are few things more dangerous to the moral and spiritual life than to try to pacify ourselves with the word, "Oh! it is a little thing." An eye enlightened and sharpened by the grace of God sees in the very least sin the beginning of much evil. A tender conscience knows that behind the least wrong a whole world of misdeeds is concealed. Do we believe this? Do we believe that the very least sinful thought cannot be allowed to exist and dwell in the soul without doing infinite damage? If we do believe these things we act as if we believed them not. We start back in fear and horror at the mention of some great crime; but the little sins of our daily life have become as it were trusted friends, and do not appear like sins. Great passions we recognise and condemn; but little outbursts of anger we overlook. Great faults we severely criticise; little breaches of faith we suffer to pass. And yet the same unbroken, unsubdued natural will is the cause of both the one and the other. No condemned criminal committed his great crime for which he is to suffer the last penalty of the law at once, and without any previous schooling in iniquity. Little faults and sins and crimes paved the way. If we ask why it is that the workings of the Holy Spirit have had so little effect, and been so little understood, one reason at least would be sure to be given, and it is this: the little ways in which the Spirit works have not been attended to and taken advantage of, and the little snares and pitfalls in our daily course have not been sufficiently observed and avoided. Well for us if we avoid the least occasion of sin, and mark well the many and varied ways in which the Spirit works within us.

CHRIST hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.—Galatians iii. 13, 14.

THE quotation, "Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree," is taken from the Book of Deuteronomy, and reads thus, "He that is hanged is accursed of God;" or, as it is in the margin, "He that is hanged is the curse of God." St. Paul, applying the term to Christ, says, that He was made "the curse" for us. In another place he says, Christ "was made sin on our behalf." He was accounted, treated as sinful, "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him;" that is, that we, in union with Christ, might be accounted righteous and receive the blessing. Christ became "a curse," that upon us might come the blessing. Man had rendered himself liable to the curse on account of his disobedience: "Cursed is every one which continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them." Man did not continue in them. Christ came and redeemed us from the curse, by becoming a "curse for us." Blessed be God for His unspeakable mercies! We can feel that a heavy burden has been taken off from us; that "One Who is mighty" has borne it for us. Here is our hope, our joy, our confidence. "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law." By the sacrifice of Himself He has made us free, and introduced us into that state in which the blessing of Abraham may come upon us. Would that we had more grace fully to understand all that the Christ has done and suffered for us; to understand the mystery of the Cross! If we realised it we could not remain indifferent. They who crucified Him looked on with indifference, because they "knew not what they did." We know that if we sin we add to the sufferings of our Redeemer. Oh, for grace and faith to avoid sin, and to co-operate with our Saviour's unbounded love, that we may receive pardon and grace to help, and be clothed with the blessing through faith!

BUT now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet.—1 Corinthians xv. 20—25.

THESE words are closely connected in our minds with the solemn mysteries of death. There are few who have not heard them at the grave of some loved friend or relative. The adoption of this chapter into the funeral service of our Church has made it familiar to us all. We should be careful lest familiarity with the letter may hinder us from entering into all the hidden depth of its spiritual teaching. In Adam all die. In some mysterious way death passed upon all men descended from the first Adam. By union with Christ we are saved from spiritual death. Death itself has lost its sting. Christ has taken away the power of death to slay eternally. Death is now but a dark archway beneath which we have to pass to our eternal inheritance. For one moment a shadow crosses our path; all is dark. It is but for a moment. The next, the glorious light of a brighter and happier world bursts upon our upward gaze. We need not fear death. When we think of the grave, let us think at the same time of Him Who by His death and burial has consecrated our graves. Death may be gloomy; the resurrection is glorious. Christ has risen again, the firstfruits of them that slept. In Him we shall be made alive. Through death as the portal, we shall enter on that true life which in union with Christ we shall have in our eternal home beyond. We shall reign with Him Who puts all enemies under His feet. As the "power of death has done man violence," so the power of Christ, Who conquered death, should give us confidence and a sense of rest and peace.

NOW concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.—1 Corinthians xvi. 1, 2.

"THIS passage constitutes the great Scripture warrant for the weekly offertory." We should give to God systematically of that with which He has blessed us. St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to make their collections regularly upon the first day of the week, thus connecting them with religious worship. We should ever remember that the offertory is part of the public worship of Almighty God. As we make our offering, let us look up to God and consciously offer it to Him, and ask Him to receive it. Let us ask Him also to accept the offerings of our fellow-worshippers. Ask Him to make the members of His Church more liberal, and that their liberality may proceed from pure motives. Alms should be a portion of every Christian's weekly expenditure. Whether he be rich or poor, whether he gives a penny or a pound, every member of Christ's Church is bound to lay by him in store according as God has prospered him. Alms should be given from pure motives. Let no taint of self enter into this part of our religious worship. Let no interested motives intrude; such as pride, vanity, a love of patronising, the praise of men, nor even our own self-applause. Let us offer first ourselves to God, and then our gifts. Let us try to conceal from men the amount we give, lest their praise be our reward. Let us give willingly, as well as liberally; for "God loveth a cheerful giver." When the offerings of the people are placed on the Holy Table, let us lift up our hearts to God, and join in the prayer that He may accept the alms and oblations of the Church. Thus the offertory will be not a mere formal ceremony, nor a means of collecting money; but a living institution through which, by God's grace, we may expect much blessing to our souls—from the exercise it affords to self-denial, and holy feelings and acts of love to God and man.

Passion Sunday.

CHRIST being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands; that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves; but by His own Blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.—Hebrews ix. 11, 12.

ONCE in the year the high priest entered into the holiest of holies. On the Day of Atonement, with the greatest care and solemnity, he entered within the veil. The ceremony was in all respects typical. Through it the Holy Spirit was teaching deep spiritual truths: first, it was meant to teach the Israelites the exceeding sinfulness of sin, that through sin they would forfeit the privileges of the Divine Presence; again, it was meant to teach them that as yet there was not free access to the holiest place, even the high priest himself could not enter in save on the one appointed day, and that not without blood, which had to be offered by him on his own account as well as for the people. Thus these ordinances of the tabernacle were meant rather to teach spiritual truths than to be means of grace. They pointed onwards to the time when the ministration of Christ in the true tabernacle should supply all those needs to which the Aaronic ministration only bore witness. When Christ, our true High Priest, came, He entered in once for all—not once in each year—into the holiest place; not into the Jewish holy of holies, which was but a type of the real, but into the immediate Presence of God. As He was sinless, He needed not any sacrifice for Himself. His Blood, with which He enters within the veil, is for us alone, to cleanse us from sin, and to effect in deed and in truth that which the Mosaic law and sacrifice typified. Thus Christ is the true antitype of the Mosaic sacrifices. He has been once offered to bear the sins of many, and shall appear apart from sin to them that wait for Him unto salvation, whose consciences have been purged from dead works to serve the living God, and who shall then enter upon the eternal inheritance.

BLESSED be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love: having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He hath made us accepted in the Beloved.—Ephesians i. 3—6.

THE Israelites of old were blessed with many temporal blessings. We, the true Israelites, are "blessed with all spiritual blessings." These blessings were undeserved both by them and by us. It was the goodness and love of God which bestowed them. These blessings, both temporal and spiritual, are through Jesus Christ. It is only in Him we can understand God's dealings with man, either in the olden times or under the present dispensation. He is the centre of all history, the key which unlocks the secrets of the divine government of the world. As all the promises to Israel of old had their true fulfilment in Christ, so the blessings also which they received were given in Him Who was "slain before the foundation of the world." This great truth has been more fully revealed to us. It "was manifested at the end of the times for our sakes who through Him are believers in God." Our being called to the inheritance is through Jesus Christ. He is the ground and cause of our salvation. To Him are due all the inconceivable, incomparable riches of His chosen. For His sake God accounts us "holy, and without blame." Our adoption we owe to Him, and not to any worthiness in ourselves. What is the end and aim of all these glorious blessings? The "praise of the glory of His grace." How necessary to ask ourselves again and again whether our souls recognise the riches of the redeeming, sin-forgiving, seeking love of God in Christ Jesus! Are we really living as those should live who are "accepted in the Beloved." Oh, that our hearts were filled with gratitude, that we might thank Him every day for all His great, His inestimable blessings!

THE bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own Blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach.—Hebrews xiii. 11—13.

DO we try to realise, so far as it is possible for us so to do, all the depth of meaning contained in such words as these: "Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own Blood, suffered without the gate?" Do we value as we ought the aids and blessings which may be drawn from a devout contemplation of our Lord's sufferings? Oh, how manifold are the fruits of the Passion of the Christ! Here it is expressly stated that He suffered to "sanctify His people." He was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. He bore grief and sorrow even unto death to render us meet for our inheritance. He was condemned that we might be forgiven. He was crowned with thorns that we might be crowned and reign with Him in glory. He was forsaken, that He might win for us the everlasting Presence of God, that we might never be forsaken or deserted. Manifold indeed are the fruits of the Passion of our Lord. The contemplation of His sufferings should fill us with a fervent love of Him, and an earnest desire to obey and please Him in all things. If sin has inflicted grievous wounds on our souls, there is a Balm for them all in the precious Blood of Christ. Though the "handwriting of ordinances was against us," Christ has "blotted it out and nailed it to His Cross." Well for us if we devoted ourselves more entirely to Him; well for us if we worked and suffered patiently for Him. May He Who endured such sufferings for our sakes teach us to know something of the value which He set upon our souls, that we may never resist His Will, but seek to be entirely conformed to it. Let us go forth out of the camp, the dwelling-place of sin. Let us completely break with it, and take up and bear the yoke of Him to Whom we owe our creation, redemption, and hope of salvation.

SEE now that I, even I, am He, and there is no god with Me: I kill, and I make alive; I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to heaven, and say, I live for ever. If I whet My glittering sword, and Mine hand take hold on judgment; I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me.—Deuteronomy xxxii. 39—41.

WE have here the concluding portion of the Song of Moses. In the first part we see God in mercy and love showering down blessings on His Church. These blessings are like the dew and gentle rain, they influence the life and growth of the Church. This evening we read of the vengeance of God. He is a God of judgment, as well as of mercy. Justice is an attribute of His, as well as love. "We know Him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God;" for "there is none that can deliver out of His hand." When He "whets His glittering sword" well may the nations tremble, for all "must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may receive the things done in the body according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." Then He "will render vengeance to His enemies, and reward them that hate Him." The judgment will be undisputed. It will be a just judgment. It will be according to the deeds of each. To His adversaries, vengeance; to His people, mercy and forgiveness. He leaves us without excuse. He warns before He strikes, and also He makes a way of escape. He provides "means whereby His banished may be restored." "The Blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth from all sin." If we "believe on the Lord Jesus Christ," and "try His works to do;" instead of vengeance we shall find mercy; instead of the glittering sword, the outstretched arm of a loving Saviour; instead of the judgment which our evil deeds so worthily deserve, we shall, by the comfort of His grace, be relieved; instead of mourning in our captivity under the bondage of sin, we shall "rejoice with His people" in the freedom wherewith Christ has made us free.

AND Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchæus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who He was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see Him: for He was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchæus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house.—St. Luke xix. 1—5.

THE evening of Thursday drew on. Jesus must seek a resting-place for the night. Before doing so He performs another miracle of mercy. As He was leaving Jericho two blind men raise their voices, and cry, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy." Knowing their faith, and full of compassion, He bids them draw near, and, touching their eyes, He gives them sight—sight to their bodily eyes, and sight to their spiritual eyes; for they rejoice and glorify God. Just outside the gates of the town another incident occurs full of deep interest. The publican Zacchæus longed to see Jesus, and climbed a sycomore tree for the purpose. His faith is rewarded: his wish is more than granted. Not only does he see Jesus, but the Lord wills to dwell that night beneath his roof. What hours of peace and blessedness for the household of Zacchæus! Hours of holy converse with the Lord. The proud Jews might scorn the Publican, because of his hated profession; but the Saviour of men deems his house the worthiest in which to tarry. Christ's divine love called forth the best feelings of Zacchæus. Like most of the publicans, it would appear he was an extortioner and unjust. But now he promises that he will restore fourfold the goods he had fraudulently obtained, and devote half his income to works of charity. Thus he gives the truest proof of the sincerity of his repentance. It is a blessed thing to have Jesus as our Guest. We may all entertain Him, if we will. He knocks without at the door of our hearts. Let us open wide the door and bid Him enter. He will come in and sup with us, and we with Him.

Friday in Passion Week.—Evening.

NOW it came to pass, that a certain woman named Martha received Him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard His word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to Him, and said, Lord, dost Thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her.—St. Luke x. 38—42.

ON this evening, the evening of Friday before Palm Sunday, Jesus parts with the train of pilgrims. These go forward to seek for lodgings in Jerusalem, or to build huts or booths in which to dwell during the Passover season. He turns aside into Bethany, and enters the house of His friends, certain of a warm welcome. It was six days before the Passover, and Jesus seems to have earnestly desired to spend the quiet Sabbath hours with those of whom it is written, "Now Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." Blessed is that home in which the Lord longs to dwell, and blessed are all they who willingly open their doors to admit Him. If Christ dwell in the home, there is peace and there is happiness. The home is then a holy sanctuary. Love and mutual forbearance are found there. If Christ dwell in the house constant communication is kept up with heaven; a family altar is reared on which the continual sacrifice of prayer, and praise, and thanksgiving is offered up. We are without excuse if Jesus does not dwell in our homes. He is ever knocking. He demands admittance. His persistent knocking is evidence of His great love and patience. Let us bid Him enter, and straightway He will come in "with His healing, saving Cross. He will come in with His divine fellowship and love." When He does come in, let us welcome Him and make every effort to keep Him. Let us follow the example of the two disciples at Emmaus, and constrain Him to enter, and pray Him to abide with us. Let us then sit at His feet, and choose the good part which shall not be taken away from us.

Saturday in Passion Week.—Evening.

NOW when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat. But when His disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, He said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon Me.—St. Matthew xxvi. 6—10.

WHEN the sun had set, and the Sabbath was past, His friends in Bethany "made Him a supper." The feast was in the house of Simon the leper; that is, one who had been a leper, but was cured; otherwise "he could not have lived in his own house, nor mingled in general society." It is probable that it was Jesus Who had cleansed him, and this might have been "one cause of the profound belief in Him which prevailed in that little household, and of the tender affection with which they always welcomed Him." It has been suggested that Simon the leper was Martha's husband. He appears to have occupied a good position in society, and the family were well-known and beloved. They were diligent to give expression to the grateful love they felt for Jesus; more especially Mary, whom we have seen on a former occasion sitting at the feet of Jesus, having chosen the good part. Now she gives yet another proof of her devotion and love. She has a costly treasure; a flask of the precious nard. Who so worthy of it as Jesus? She draws near with reverence. In thankfulness and adoring love she anoints first His head and then His feet, and, bending over Him, suffers her hairs to dry off the ointment, while He "dries her tears and those of her brother in salving with the words of life the wounds of her soul." Jesus, the crucified One, is worthy of our love. He is worthy of the best gifts we can bring Him. May we, like Mary, prove our love by drawing nigh to Him with our best gifts, and offering to Him ourselves also, our body, soul, and spirit, to be a lively sacrifice; for this is our reasonable service.

Palm Sunday.

AND when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee. And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, and said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.—St. Matthew xxi. 10—13.

TWICE during His public ministry our Lord cleansed the temple. The sellers of merchandise and the changers of money soon forgot the lesson taught them by the first cleansing; and when the Saviour enters Jerusalem amidst the hosannas of the people, He finds the Court of the Gentiles crowded with buyers and sellers, and its precincts soiled by the oxen and sheep. It was convenient for those about to offer sacrifices to be able to buy on the spot the animal to be used in sacrifice. But no amount of convenience could make it tolerable in the sight of the Son of God that His Father's house should be desecrated. With a stern reproof He casts all out; nor will He even suffer the people to pass to and fro with vessels, lest they should make the outer courts of the temple a mere thoroughfare. Let us learn from this act of our Lord to reverence the house of God. It should be kept holy unto the Lord. No worldly thoughts or worldly business should intrude. Again, we learn that we should cleanse with earnest zeal the spiritual temple; that is, the Church of God built on the foundation of Christ as the corner stone, and of the apostles as pillars. And, lastly, we learn that as each individual Christian is a temple of God, we should purify our hearts, and make them fit dwelling-places for His Holy Spirit. When Jesus had cleansed the temple He departs, and enters, probably for the last time, the house of His friends at Bethany, and lodges there. Oh, how blessed that home! How blessed those hearts which derive true pleasure from holy, peaceful converse with the Lord!

Monday in Holy Week.—Evening.

AND in the day time He was teaching in the temple; and at night He went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to Him in the temple, for to hear Him. Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle Him in His talk.—St. Luke xxi. 37, 38; and St. Matthew xxii. 15.

OUR Lord each evening during this Holy Week retires from Jerusalem. As there were many reasons for seeking a quieter resting-place than Bethany, He seems to have passed the nights, till the night of Thursday in which He was betrayed, in the open air; probably in the garden on the Mount of Olives, to which He and His disciples were in the habit of resorting. While He sleeps beneath the bright paschal moon the sleep of those at peace with God and man, His enemies do not sleep. During the hours which ought to have been given to rest they are busy plotting the destruction of the only sinless man. They dare not seize Jesus openly in the temple, for they fear the people. They take counsel how they may entrap Him in His words, and so injure His influence with the multitude. In the daytime they carry out what during the night they had plotted. With what wondrous power and wisdom our Lord repels every temptation, and at the same time teaches them lessons of life! He teaches them, if only they would learn, that they should "render to God the things that are God's;" they should offer themselves, their body, soul, and spirit, to Him Who was their Creator and their owner. He proves to them that God is the God of the living; and that, because He lives, they may live also. Oh, that we would listen with more attentive ears to these lessons of life and wisdom! Let us yield ourselves to God as living sacrifices: it is our reasonable service. Let us beseech Him to accept the sacrifice, and not to deal with us according to our sins, but according to His grace and mercy. Let us seek to have consciences void of offence, that we may rest here each night in peace, and hereafter enjoy eternal peace in the heavens.

AND Jesus looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And He saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And He said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.—St. Luke xxi. 1—4.

WHEN Jesus had answered the questions of His enemies with more than human wisdom, He uttered solemn woes against them, because, though silenced, they nevertheless remained unchanged in heart and thought. He then prepares to leave the temple; to leave it for the last time for ever. But He is unwilling to do so with the words of woe still echoing through its courts. He prefers to look around for some object to praise, some person to extol. At the moment a poor widow unostentatiously drops her little contribution into the treasury. To the man of the world her gift may appear very insignificant: indeed, judged by its intrinsic value, it was almost worthless. Jesus looks at the gift in a different way. He sees deep into the spirit of the woman, and reads there the motive which suggested the gift. He reads her holy intention, and knows the self-sacrificing spirit in which she had given her little all. He commends her; for did not He promise a blessing even to the "cup of cold water" given "in His Name." In commending her, He teaches to us and to all generations the great lesson that the essence of charity is self-denial; and that God measures an offering not by the actual amount given, but by its proportion to the means of the giver, and the willing mind with which it is given. Jesus now leaves the temple. Sadly and silently He turns His back on the sacred building. How painful must His thoughts have been during that evening walk over the slopes of Olivet! He knew that the unbelief of the Jews and their rejection of Him would soon cause that temple building, "which stood there as an epitome of Jewish history from the days of Solomon onwards," to be in a few years a mere heap of ruins, the reproach of the whole world.

THEN Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is the light with you. Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you: for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth. While ye have light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light. These things spake Jesus, and departed, and did hide Himself from them.—St. John xii. 35, 36.

"YET a little while is the light with you." It had shone brightly for some time; but now it was to be withdrawn for ever, and they should henceforth walk in the darkness of their hardened hearts. Jesus the Christ was the light of the world. If they had walked in that light they would not have stumbled; but they refused to do so, and the light was withdrawn. It is the law of all God's gifts: if we make use of them, God will give us more, and make us more capable of benefiting by them; but if we refuse to make use of them, they will be withdrawn. Jesus retires from the din of the city, and passes this day in quiet solitude. In vain do the multitudes await Him; in vain does the traitor watch for an opportunity to betray Him; in vain do the priests and Pharisees look out for Him, with sinister hope that at last He should be in their power. To-day He enters not the city or the temple courts. We know not how or where He spent its hours. But from His life, His words, His teaching, we doubt not that these hours of retirement were spent in silent prayer, in peaceful communing with His Father, and in preparing His disciples for the awful events of the morrow. His life's work is done; and this night He lays Himself down for the last time, to awake up in the morning never to sleep again. We are now living in the light. The bright light of the Gospel is shining around us. Let us make good use of it, lest darkness come upon us. Let us walk as children of the light. Let us arise and seek the true path. God will then grant us more light, more inward illumination, to continue in the way of salvation, and to increase in goodness, righteousness, and truth.

AND as they did eat, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and gave to them, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body. And He took the cup, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them: and they all drank of it. And He said unto them, This is My Blood of the new testament, which is shed for many.—St. Mark xiv. 22—24.

TOWARDS evening, when all things were now ready, Jesus and His disciples leave the place of retirement and approach Jerusalem by the old familiar road from the Mount of Olives. For the last time Jesus sits in the midst of His beloved disciples in that large upper room, which He had chosen as the fittest place to eat with them this farewell feast. Here He instituted the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; and commanded us "to continue a perpetual memory of that His precious Death until His coming again." Ever since that evening, which is an evening to be much observed unto the Lord, the Church has obeyed the command. The blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ has been since then a memorial of the Death of our Saviour. Our souls are strengthened and refreshed by His Body and Blood, as our bodies are by the bread and wine. He comforts our hearts, and gives Himself to us as our blessed portion. This is one more token of the great love of God for His people. As we think of this love, we cannot help saying, What is man, that God should be thus mindful of him? We are wholly undeserving of His love. But the very feeling of our unworthiness may give us comfort. It must fill us with a deep humility. It is with the humble and the contrite in heart that God wills to dwell. With the feeling of our unworthiness we may draw near with faith, certain that our Redeemer will meet us. If we acknowledge to Him our emptiness, He will fill us out of His fulness; if we acknowledge our poverty, He will make us rich; if we acknowledge our weakness, He will strengthen us. Yes; His love is great, His goodness incomparable. Let us pray for grace to show forth in our communions and in our lives our gratitude for a dying Saviour's love.

Good Friday.

THEN said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in paradise. He saith unto His mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith He to the disciple, Behold thy mother! About the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me? Jesus saith, I thirst. It is finished. Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.—St. Luke xxiii. 34, and other passages.

WE have grouped together the "seven words from the Cross." We see in them how a heart filled with love breaks. A heart which, even on the Cross, can find excuses for the cruelty of man, and pray in the midst of deep suffering for those who caused the suffering; a heart which, even on the Cross, can give additional proof of loving-thoughtfulness for a lonely mother and a loved disciple; a heart which, even amid the pains of death, can mercifully accept the true repentance of a returning sinner, and encourage him with the knowledge that he should be with his Redeemer in Paradise. For one terrible moment a feeling of loneliness, almost of desertion, seems to have come over His soul; a cloud of dust and smoke from the great battle that was being fought between Him and the spirit of evil rose up for one brief moment between Him and His Father, and hid God from the eyes of His Son. Satan, who had "departed from Him for a season," had returned to urge Him with a last temptation, to tell Him that though He had done His part, God had forgotten His. How awful the struggle was may be discerned in the cry, "Why hast Thou forsaken Me?" We discern also the intensity of His faith; for, notwithstanding the apparent desertion, God is His God still; it is "My God, My God" that He cries. He knew that He was heard, He knew man's redemption was complete, He knew all was accomplished; He can with confidence add "It is finished:" the suffering is finished, the sacrifice is finished, the reconciliation is complete. Oh, how full of love was that heart towards the Heavenly Father, as He looks up to the Everlasting Home, and with parting breath cries, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit!"

Easter Even.

NOW the next day, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night, and steal Him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.—St. Matthew xxvii. 62—66.

THE Saviour of men rests in the grave. His enemies do not rest. They are not yet at ease. They fear lest their evil work may, even yet, be overturned, and all their sin and trouble be in vain. The application they make to Pilate in to-day's Gospel shows their suspicious nature. They appear indeed to have triumphed. He Whom they persecuted is dead. The disciples are sorrowful and cast down. But the triumph of the one will be short-lived, and the sorrow of the others will soon be turned into joy. The very suspicion of the chief priests and Pharisees has been blessed to the Church: it has given additional proof to the fact of the Resurrection. All that could be done, was done to make the sepulchre sure. Friends and enemies believe Him dead. Friends carry Him to His burial, and prepare spices; while enemies make the grave secure. But neither friends nor enemies, nor the powers of this world, nor yet the might of Satan, could hold Him in the grave. The prophecy was uttered, "Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell; neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption:" and it was fulfilled to the letter. Through the grave and gate of death He passed to His joyful Resurrection. May we who have been baptised into the death of Jesus Christ, by continual mortifying our corrupt affections be buried with Him; that through the grave and gate of death we too may pass to our joyful resurrection, not for our merits, but for His Who died, and was buried, and rose again for us.

Easter-Day.

PETER therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, and the napkin, that was about His head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed.—St. John xx. 3—8.

WE rejoice to-day in the victory of the Saviour. His enemies thought they had triumphed when they saw Him laid in the grave, and the sepulchre made secure. But, lo! a great trembling of Nature, a rending of the heavens, and an angel of God descends to roll away the stone. The living Jesus steps forth from the darkness of the tomb. He has won the victory. Truth has conquered; and all lying, deceit, false witness has been utterly defeated. With this victory has the victory of all truth on earth been decided. The very grave corroborates the truths declared in the Gospel. Easter is the pledge and earnest of our resurrection. With each succeeding Easter it becomes ever clearer that the altars of idols are gradually sinking, the schools of heathen wisdom closing, and the Cross of Christ being raised as the standard of all nations. With each succeeding Easter, the victory of Christianity is seen to be more complete. The time is coming—it must come—when kings and subjects, rich and poor, men and angels shall bow before the great Easter Prince. As in our solar system but one sun gives light and quickening power to the millions of created things; so in the spiritual kingdom there can be but one Sun to enlighten, to warm, to vivify. We live now beneath the warming rays of this Sun. Hereafter, we hope to be quickened by its warmer, nearer rays, into new powers of motion and life. This hope is no enthusiasm. It is certainty. The resurrection of Jesus is its warrant. Christ's victory is the victory of everlasting truth, and the pledge of the victory of His bride, the Church.

WHEN Jesus was risen early the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven devils. She went and told them that had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. They, when they had heard that He was alive, and had been seen of her, believed not. After that He appeared in another form unto two of them, as they walked, and went into the country. They went and told it unto the residue: neither believed they them.—St. Mark xvi. 9—13.

THE Saviour appeared in "another form unto two of them," as they walked together to Emmaus. They speak of all that had happened at Jerusalem; that is, of those things which had happened on Good Friday, for as yet they knew not that Jesus was risen from the dead. They were sad, for their hopes were buried in the grave of their Master. A fellow-traveller draws near, and joins Himself to them. They know Him not, for "their eyes were holden." Thus Jesus walks beside those who mourn and are sad. We may not see Him; we may believe Him far away: nevertheless, He is there, and, if we do but trust Him, He will remove from us all cause of mourning. He asks the two disciples the subject of their conversation, and then declares the whole truth of God concerning Himself. What a wonderful commentary that must have been, Jesus Himself being the Commentator! How clear the light which He throws on the things concerning Himself! Has He not often spoken to us by His Spirit in similar tones? Have not our hearts, like theirs, burned within us at His precious words? Oh, that we would pay deeper attention to every word of Christ! When they arrived at the village He "made as though He would have gone further." Doubtless He would have done so, had they not constrained Him to abide. The Christ is anxious to confer grace on us; but we must desire it, we must seek it. Do we desire Christ to abide with us? Do we constrain Him to do so? If we do, we shall be blessed with His Presence. As we receive blessings, let us, like the two disciples, "rise up the same hour," anxious to share with others the blessings we have received.

Tuesday in Easter Week.—Evening.

JESUS Himself stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. But they were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they had seen a spirit. And He said unto them, Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself: handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see Me have.—St. Luke xxiv. 36—39.

JESUS had already appeared individually to many of His chosen ones. Mary Magdalene had seen Him; St. Peter had had a revelation from Him. The two disciples had enjoyed intercourse with Him for some hours on their way to Emmaus. Now the disciples collected together in the upper room in Jerusalem are permitted to behold Him. On the first day of the week, Jesus stood in their midst, and said unto them, "Peace be unto you." Truly they wanted the blessing of peace after all the trying circumstances through which they had lately passed. He not only wishes peace to them, He bestows it on them. It is ever thus with the Lord. He knows our real wants, and supplies them. He never comes empty-handed to us. He has innumerable gifts. One of His best gifts is His peace. If we have peace with God, no blessing can fail us. We go on our way with joy. Peace and joy are two great Easter-gifts. See the result of the blessing of peace to the apostles: their fears were allayed, their superstitions overcome, and their faith strengthened. A similar result should follow the breathing of peace into our hearts. We should no longer fear what man can do unto us: our superstitions should be allayed, our faith strengthened. Christ will inspire us with courage and good desires. By His special grace preventing us, He will make us desire to live in peace here, and to long for and to reach out after that land where we shall be at peace for evermore. These are the "good desires" which we this day thank God for "putting into our minds." But desires, however good, however earnest, are not sufficient of themselves. We should therefore humbly beseech the Almighty so to assist us by His "continual help, that we may bring the same to good effect."

I WILL bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together. I sought the Lord, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. O taste and see that the Lord is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in Him.—Psalm xxxiv. 1—4, 8.

"I WILL bless the Lord at all times." More especially should our hearts be stirred within us to bless and praise His holy Name when we stand in imagination in the midst of Jerusalem, and consider its holy places, and mark the wonderful events which occurred in those great forty days after Easter during which the risen Lord tarried in the circle of His rejoicing disciples. The Church in early times expressed herself in language very similar to that of the Psalmist, when she wished to make known in all its depths of meaning the joy of those forty days—days in which she "tasted that the Lord was good." All His disciples seem to have united in those days to tell of His goodness. They magnified the Lord, and exalted His holy Name. True, a touch of sadness mingled with their joy. The various appearances of the risen One were of brief duration; they were suddenly broken off. By some He was scarce recognised before He vanished out of their sight. He was educating them to do without Him. He was teaching them that His spiritual Presence should more than make up for His absence in the body. His spiritual Presence we can enjoy. We cannot see Him with our eyes, nor handle Him with our hands; still He is present amongst us, and will ever be with His Church to the end of time. We have His word for it, that He will never leave us, never forsake us: let us trust His word. Those in olden times who "sought the Lord were delivered from their fears." Let us seek Him; let us seek to realise His spiritual Presence. Let us look unto Him, and we shall be enlightened. Thus we shall "taste and see that the Lord is good."

WHEN this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.—1 Corinthians xv. 54—57.

JESUS Christ, the Prince of Peace, is also the Prince of Life. He has taken from death its power and sting, and has "brought life and immortality to light." He is the firstfruits of them that slept. At His feet lies death deprived of its sting; and from the opened grave the words resound, "I live, and because I live ye shall live also." Yes; "death is swallowed up in victory." Death's arrows are broken; his quiver is empty. The night of death is no longer utter darkness; it is enlightened by a gleam from the risen Easter Sun. We need no longer shudder at the grave. It is but the quiet resting-place of our bodies till the great Resurrection-day. The grave of Christ has consecrated our graves, and "breathed a benison over the sleeping dust." Let the unbelievers and doubters fear death; we will not. Though death appear outwardly of all fearful things the most fearful, yet in his train come rest, peace, joy, security, blessedness, heaven. Who can fear in the immediate presence of heaven? Who can be fearful or afraid in the presence of Christ? No; "the day of our death is better than the day of our birth." The one is the beginning of many trials and much suffering; the other is an end of all sorrow. Because Christ lives, there is no place for sorrow. Because our Redeemer lives, we believe that we too shall live; and that at the last day we shall take our place amongst all those who have been redeemed and saved, crowned and throned. We shall be the companions of saints and angels in heavenly places. Then in full union with Christ we shall learn what true life means. Then we shall fully realise that death is but the entrance to blessedness and joys for evermore.

BUT God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement.—Romans v. 8—11.

"GOD commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." He did not wait till we had done something to render us worthy to be loved. Before time was, before we had the being which we now possess, He thought on us to do us good. What He thought over in eternity, He carried out in time. His beneficent hand had prepared all kinds of good things. Neither our unfaithfulness nor our unthankfulness has been able to seal up the fountain of His gifts nor stay the progress of His grace. It was love without beginning which has loved us through eternal centuries; love without measure which has made us what we are, given us what we have, and promises more to follow; love without change which could not be quenched even by all the bitter waters of our unrighteousness. Ought not our hearts be penetrated with thankfulness and love to God in return? As God's love for us is without measure, so should our love for Him know no measure. For only then can it be called love, when it is a pure mirror of the divine love. Our love, in comparison to God's love, is indeed small; but it should ever resemble it. If we wish to love God truly, we must be ready to do as He has done. If He was ready and willing to sacrifice Himself for us, we must be ready to sacrifice ourselves, our desires, wishes, inclinations for Him. Self-denial must not be irksome to us; we must be ready to deny ourselves, even as Christ denied Himself, for the spiritual well-being of our brethren. Then, indeed, we shall have peace within; yea, we shall "joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom we have now received the atonement."

THY mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. O Lord, Thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light. O continue Thy lovingkindness unto them that know Thee; and Thy righteousness to the upright in heart.—Psalm xxxvi. 5—10.

AS we mark well the varying seasons of the year,—Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter,—do we not see a wonderful similarity in them to the various ages in the life of man? We may divide the life of man into four distinct periods. The period of childhood, with all its playfulness and innocence and prophetic promise, fit image of the Spring with its buds and blossoms and prophecies of coming blessings. Then youth, with all its strength and vigour, to whose hopes a whole world stands open, resembles the Summer with its green grass and growing corn, everything looking healthy and strong. The full-grown man—man come to maturity, full of wisdom and ripe experience—is like the Autumn with its ripe corn and plenteous harvest; the rich return for well-spent hours of toil and labour. Lastly, old age, the period of rest, the period of waiting for renewed life when the Eternal Spring opens up, how closely it resembles the Winter, the sabbath of the earth, the time of rest; Winter with its home comforts, its sweet peace, its time of waiting for life and activity in the Spring? Are we not thus taught a lesson full of comfort and blessedness? We have a certain course marked out for us by the Will of God; let us walk therein: and as each season passes we shall find ourselves more fitted for the next, rejoicing more and more in the lovingkindness of our God, and in the end waiting for that renewal of life in the Everlasting Spring of which we have a pledge in the Resurrection of our Master and Head, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The First Sunday after Easter.

(Low Sunday.)

AND after eight days again His disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you. Then saith He to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold My hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into My side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto Him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.—St. John xx. 26—29.

ST. THOMAS was not present on the evening of the Resurrection, when our Lord bestowed His blessing on the apostles, and confirmed to them their authority to preach and to teach. When they tell him afterwards that they had seen the Lord, he doubts the fact. His doubt brings its own punishment. For eight days he suffers the agony of suspense; and doubtless his sufferings increased, when he beheld the manifest joy of his fellow-disciples who believed in the Resurrection. Once again, on the first day of the week, the Lord suddenly appears in their midst. He thus consecrates the day which from that time the Church has set apart as holy unto the Lord. His Presence on these occasions is a pledge of His spiritual Presence with those who on this day assemble themselves together to worship and adore. What valuable lessons we are taught by the brief conversation which ensues,—"Be not faithless, but believing!" Is not the injunction as necessary now as then? Are there no faithless ones now? Even amongst professing Christians, do we not find many who are faithless to their Divine Master? Would that the words might now have the same blessed effect that they had on St. Thomas! What a noble confession he made, "My Lord and my God!" It is almost the strongest confession of the Divinity of our Saviour ever made. He, however, believed because he saw. Still more blessed shall we be, if, walking by faith and not by sight, we believe and confess that Jesus is our Lord and our God.

Monday after the First Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O Lord; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee. For Thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with Thee. The foolish shall not stand in Thy sight: Thou hatest all workers of iniquity. But as for me, I will come into Thy house in the multitude of Thy mercy: and in Thy fear will I worship toward Thy holy temple.—Psalm v. 3—5, 7.

God is not only love and goodness, He is also holiness and righteousness. So in His Word the thunders of His punishments roll, and the lightnings of His anger flash through the very pages which contain the most friendly invitations and loving promises. Not alone in the Old Testament, but also in the New is the wrath of God declared against all that is evil, both in teaching and example. It is the New Testament that calls aloud, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked." It is the New Testament that tells us how awful is "the wrath of the Lamb." True, God is love; but His love is not weakness; it is no sinful connivance at evil. His love is a holy love which finds pleasure in everything that is good, but has no "pleasure in wickedness." Evil, in whatever shape it present itself, shall not dwell with Him; every kind of deceit and lying is His abhorrence. Of what infinite importance it is then that we should consider our ways. God in His mercy has given to each of us an unerring guide, so that we may distinguish between good and evil. This guide is that still small voice of God within us, which we call conscience. When we listen to that voice, the heart becomes a very temple of God. A temple in which the pure Word of God is taught; the Word which teaches us to direct our prayer unto Him and to look up; the Word which teaches us to be constantly and regularly found in His house, worshipping Him in His holy temple. Let us listen to this voice, and obey it. Let us walk on steadily in the road that leads to our eternal home, ridding ourselves of every hindrance as we journey on, laying aside every weight as we near the end of our course, "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Tuesday after the First Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

SO Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore. And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if Thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of Thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget Thine handmaid, but wilt give unto Thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life. —1 Samuel i. 9—11.

WHEN we consider the time in which Elkanah lived, and the many proofs we have that religion was at a very low ebb in Israel, we cannot but wonder at the remarkable faith displayed by Hannah. She was grieved because she had no child. This was ever a cause of grief to the Israelitish women, for each hoped that she might be the mother of the Messiah, the promised deliverer of Israel. Hannah's grief was aggravated by her adversary, who "provoked her sore." "Therefore she wept, and did not eat." But she knows where to take her grief; she knows Who is willing to help her to bear her burden; therefore she casts all her anxiety upon Him Who cared for her. She goes up to the "temple of the Lord." She feels there in the immediate Presence of her God. She opens up her heart to Him; when she has so done, she leaves the matter in His hands. She rises and goes forth from the temple calm, comforted; "her countenance was no more sad." She cannot now fret or grieve. The Lord will answer her as seemeth Him best. If we have true faith we shall always rest assured that God will answer our prayers. He may not always grant our desires; for what we desire may not always be for our best interests. Yet even when denying us our wish, He will answer our prayers by enlightening us as to our duties, and strengthening us to perform them. Oh, that we had more faith: faith to cast all our anxiety on the Lord; faith to trust Him, to wait patiently for Him; faith to give our best to Him; faith to dedicate ourselves to His service, and to present "our bodies a living sacrifice to Him, which is our reasonable service!"

EVENING.

WHEREFORE the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before Me for ever: but now the Lord saith, Be it far from Me; for them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed. —1 Samuel ii. 30.

THE kindness of Eli's nature led him to be a too indulgent parent. Instead of training up his sons in the fear of God, he let them have their own way, and did not even restrain them when they made themselves vile. He grieved indeed over their conduct, and when too late he even gently rebuked them. He ought to have checked them while they were still young, and not have suffered them to go on from bad to worse. Through his weak indulgence they became not only evil themselves, but made others evil. They became noted for their profligacy and rapacity; and men beholding the impious conduct of the priests, "abhorred the offering of the Lord." Therefore the judgment of God fell heavily on Eli and his house. In this judgment we have a solemn warning both to parents and to children. Parents should daily strive to bring up their children for God; they should remember that the children committed to their care have infinite capacities for becoming altogether beautiful or thoroughly bad. They should care not only for their bodies, that they should be suitably clothed and properly fed; but also that the mind should be early stored with useful knowledge, and the soul trained for its eternal inheritance. Children also should take warning, and listen to the faithful teaching of their elders, that they may grow up in the love of God, loving His mercy seat, loving His Word, loving His house, loving His service. We should all remember that we are the children of God, and yield to Him the obedience He requires. As obedient and loving children we should seek each day to grow more like our Heavenly Father; we should quit every evil way, everything that might have the least tendency to draw us into sin or make us despise God or His ordinances, remembering that they who "despise Him shall be lightly esteemed," and they who "honour Him shall be honoured."

Thursday after the First Sunday after Easter. Evening.

AND the messenger answered and said, Israel is fled before the Philistines, and there hath been also a great slaughter among the people, and thy two sons also, Hophni and Phinehas, are dead, and the ark of God is taken. And it came to pass, when he made mention of the ark of God, that he fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate, and his neck brake, and he died.—1 Samuel iv. 17, 18.

THE judgments of God begin to fall rapidly on Israel and the house of Eli. Israel had deserted God and neglected His service. We do not hear of His advice being asked before the war was entered upon with the Philistines. We do not read of any prayer for His guidance. Yet without Him they never could win a victory. We are therefore prepared for the result of the battle—complete defeat, with four thousand slain left on the field. They feel they have erred. The elders, filled with superstition, make a suggestion: "Bring hither the ark; it will act as a charm, and gain us the victory." How vain are the efforts of man if God withdraw His aid! Again they are defeated; the sign revealed to Eli is fulfilled, Hophni and Phinehas are both slain, and the ark of God is taken. We cannot help remembering the words of the Psalmist: "So God forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh; and delivered His strength into captivity, and His glory into the enemy's hand." The warning should not fall unheeded by the Church of Christ. The Church derives all its light and life from God. If He withdraw Himself all real life is gone, "Her glory is departed." Oh, how earnestly should we pray that our Church should ever be guided by God's Spirit, and enlightened by God's presence! We, as members of the Church, should thank God for our many privileges, and pray that they be not withdrawn. Let us often resort to the sanctuary of the Lord, and try there to realise God's Presence. Let the Table of the Lord see us frequent guests—frequent, but not formal guests—coming each time as by special invitation from our Saviour. If we thus take advantage of our privileges, we shall have light in the heart and joy in our life.

Friday after the First Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

AND the ark of the Lord was in the country of the Philistines seven months. And the Philistines called for the priests and the diviners, saying, What shall we do to the ark of the Lord? tell us wherewith we shall send it to His place. And they said, If ye send away the ark of the God of Israel, send it not empty; but in any wise return Him a trespass offering. Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts?—1 Samuel vi. 1—3, 6.

THE Ark of the Lord was the external token of the Presence of God amongst His people. Its use or misuse by the children of Israel, furnish some salutary lessons to the Church of Christ for all ages. First, we have a warning against superstition. The Israelites thought that the mere presence of the ark would act as a charm, and bring about in some way the defeat of their enemies. They forgot that it was God, and not the ark, that could save them. Are there not those amongst ourselves who think and act like the Israelites? Are there not those who misuse the ordinances of God, who substitute the shadow for the substance, the husk for the kernel, the letter for the Spirit? Just as the ark could not save, so privileges and ordinances cannot of themselves avail. They are tokens, pledges of God's Presence, pledges that He will hear us and grant the guidance He promises to a diligent use of His appointed means. But if through our sin we have driven God from us, then ordinances are of little value; our privileges, however great they may be, cannot of themselves save. Again, we have a warning against irreverence. The people of Beth-shemesh profaned the ark; they thought lightly about it; and their curiosity made them disregard God's command. God smote them for their sin. We who know the Lord, we who have experienced His love, ought never to be irreverent in His Presence. Bent before the throne of our Redeemer we should pour out before Him all our wants, and with hearts uplifted we should praise Him for all His glorious attributes, and thank Him for His wise, tender, merciful dealings with us, and with His Church.

Saturday after the First Sunday after Easter. Evening.

BUT the thing displeased Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us. And Samuel prayed unto the Lord. And the Lord said unto Samuel, Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them.—1 Samuel viii. 6, 7.

THE sin of the Israelites in requesting a king to be set over them consisted, first, in the desire to be "like all the nations." The Lord their God desired for them the very opposite. All the laws and ordinances which He gave them were meant to keep them a distinct people; different from other nations; superior to them in holiness; a special people unto the Lord. Is not this the sin of the Church of Christ in our own day? Do not Christians desire to be like the world, when they ought to be very different? They ought to be different in their thoughts, their hopes, their lives. Instead, however, of maintaining this distinction, they try to be "like all the nations." They think lightly of their high privileges, and do what they can to forget that they are "an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." Again, the sin of the Israelites' request consisted in rejecting God from being their king. They had been governed by God Himself as a divine theocracy. They were discontented, and showed their scorn of His government by asking them a king. Not Samuel alone did they reject; they rejected God. Their desire is granted. God gave them a king, but He gave him "in His anger." Many a time before this God granted the requests of the Israelites, but sent "leanness withal into their soul." At times it would be better far for us if God would deny us our requests. Often, "we, ignorant of ourselves, beg our own harm, which the Wise Powers deny us for our good; so find we profit by losing of our prayers." When we pray we should entirely submit our wills to the Will of God, and ask Him to grant only those things which are good for us; only those things which make for our spiritual well-being.

The Second Sunday after Easter.

THIS is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently; this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.—1 St. Peter ii. 19—21, 25.

ALMIGHTY God has given "His only Son to be unto us both a sacrifice for sin, and also an ensample of godly life;" therefore we should walk in the footsteps of Christ, and follow His example, even in suffering. There is, however, a great difference between our suffering and that of the Christ. His was innocent, sinless, patient suffering. We, His disciples, must with shame confess that it is seldom we are blameless. Often, too often, by our words and works we earn the anger of the world. Our Lord suffered, the innocent for the guilty. When reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not. Even for His enemies He prayed, and returned only good continually for their evil. When we examine our lives and thoughts, what do we see? Where is our patience and humility? Where are our intercessions for our enemies? Where is our zeal to turn from their sins those who have entered on the downward course, and to help them to return to the path which leadeth to life? How graciously the Lord has dealt with us! We were as wandering sheep; we had turned aside from the true pasture; we had deserted our Shepherd. The Lord did not reward us according to our iniquities. He searched us out, and drew us back unto Himself. He guards, feeds, tends us, as the Bishop and Shepherd of our souls. Lord Jesus, draw us closer to Thyself, that we may walk in Thy footsteps. Draw us at all times and in all places, in sinless, patient suffering, in innocent joy, in love which desires reconciliation of all enemies. Draw us in youth and old age, and leave us not till Thou hast drawn us to be with Thee for ever.

Monday after the Second Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

THEN Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord hath anointed thee to be captain over His inheritance? And it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place with a psaltery, and a tabret, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy: and the Spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man.—1 Samuel x. 1, 5, 6.

GOD was now with Saul, and he was changed "into another man." The Lord gave him a new heart, the Spirit of God came upon him, and His influence was outwardly manifest in the gift of prophecy. In Scripture history we frequently see men apparently unfit for posts of honour or danger chosen by God, and fitted by supernatural means for the work to which they were called. God took Gideon as he "threshed wheat by the winepress," and made him leader of the armies of Israel. So it was with Jephthah, Samson, Barak, and others, who became men of power and wisdom because God's Spirit was upon them. So now the Spirit of God was upon Saul. God gives him many gifts, bestows many privileges upon him. Oh, how he ought to have prized them! how he ought to have sought God's blessing upon them! Everything at the beginning of Saul's reign looks well; the prospect was promising. But if he would win the everlasting crown he must not only begin well, but continue enduring even to the end. We have many gifts, talents, privileges. They have been given us by God Himself. They are higher and greater than those bestowed on Saul. What use do we make of our privileges? How are we using our talents? Saul's position was certainly a responsible one, but ours is still more so. We have more light than he had. Let us walk as children of the light; let us not lose our opportunities, or waste our energies, but act in the living present for God, for Christ, and for His Church; and never relax our efforts till we have gained the end of the course, and entered into our eternal rest.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday after Easter. Evening.

AND Samuel said unto all Israel, Behold, the king walketh before you: and I am old and grayheaded; and I have walked before you from my childhood unto this day. Behold, here I am: witness against me before the Lord, and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you.—1 Samuel xii. 1—3.

THERE was much national rejoicing at Saul's victory over the Ammonites. But in the midst of all the nation's joy Samuel is grave. He looks on into the future, and sees there much that is sad and dark. How touching are his words! "I am old and grayheaded;" but, "behold, the king walketh before you." He is young. He has shown himself brave, and has won much popularity. We may, I think, trace in his words a slight feeling of disappointment at their ingratitude. His long life had been spent in trying to do them good, in raising them in the scale of nations, and making them more earnest in their devotion to God and goodness; and yet they prefer an untried king to him, their old and tried friend. But that which grieved him still more was their rejection of Him Who "advanced Moses and Aaron, and brought up their fathers out of the land of Egypt." He reasons with them for the last time of all "the righteous acts of the Lord." He is not jealous of Saul. Though Saul had in a measure displaced him, he feels that it is God's will, and bows before it. "Behold," he says, "the Lord hath set a king over you." Well for us if we try to imitate Samuel's piety, earnestness in religion, and perseverance in prayer. See how he took all his troubles to God. He lived his life with his eye fixed on God; his every action was done as in the sight of God. And God honoured him. If we follow this bright example we shall be truer servants of our God. We shall have true inward peace, because our hearts are pure and our consciences void of offence towards God and towards all men.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday after Easter. Evening.

AND Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the Lord will work for us: for there is no restraint to the Lord to save by many or by few. And his armourbearer said unto him, Do all that is in thine heart: turn thee; behold, I am with thee according to thy heart. And Jonathan said unto his armourbearer, Come up after me: for the Lord hath delivered them into the hand of Israel.—1 Sam. xiv. 6, 7, 12.

JONATHAN the son of Saul stands forth an independent and beautiful character in the history of Saul's reign over Israel. He was full of the spirit of true religion, and this spirit ennobled and raised him above his fellows, filling him with a heroic courage. We see to-day his heroism displayed. One of the many garrisons of the Philistines was devastating the country where Jonathan was stationed. He determines to rid the land of the burden. He will not, however, go forth in his own strength. He knows Whom he can trust. He knows the Lord can save with many or with few; nor does he shrink from confessing that all his confidence in success lies in his God. Thus he was not merely physically brave, he was also morally brave. The latter is much the noblest virtue. It is not difficult to show one's self brave in the presence of danger, or to perform some daring feat in the eyes of sympathising onlookers. It is difficult to do the right, and make a confession of one's faith in the midst of strangers and scoffers. Jonathan gives his armourbearer a sign by which they both may know whether the Lord would deliver the Philistines into their hands. Faith urged him to the attack, and faith gave him the victory. In the great battle of life each individual warrior must have a like faith. We have enemies around and enemies within us; we are powerless in ourselves; but there is a power which can overcome the world. "Who is he that overcometh the world?" asks the apostle. "He that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God." Faith was the secret of Jonathan's success. If we have faith, we shall conquer in a far more important fight, and gain the victory over a far more malignant enemy.

Thursday after the Second Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

SAMUEL said unto Saul, The Lord sent thee on a journey, and said, Go and utterly destroy the sinners the Amalekites. Wherefore then didst thou not obey the voice of the Lord? Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.—1 Samuel xv. 16, 18, 19, 22.

AGAIN Saul is tried in the balance and found wanting. God sees fit now to carry out His threat, "Surely I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." Saul is to be His instrument. Willingly Saul leads forth his army; for he is brave, and had a warrior's love for warfare and victory. But as to carrying out fully all that the Lord commanded, that he does not. The old headstrong wilfulness is again manifest. He would act just as he liked, not as God commanded. The sheep and oxen were too good to be destroyed; he would keep them for himself, and bring Agag home a captive to add to his triumph in the eyes of his people. What a lesson Samuel teaches him, and us through him! "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." Well for us if we have already learned this lesson. Our Lord Himself taught us the blessedness of obedience both by His example as also by His words, when He said, "I am come to do Thy Will; I am content to do it." The more we yield our wills to the Will of God, the more we shall progress in virtue. "If ye love Me," says our Saviour, "keep My commandments." Not only should we obey God, we should also obey those under whose authority we are placed by the providence of God. "The powers that be are ordained of God." In submitting to authority we submit to God. Obedience leads up to and is closely connected with other virtues. It is the "grave of wilfulness and the origin of humility." Pride is the root of disobedience. If we desire to obey, we must be humble. If we have learned humility, it will give us pleasure to obey. O Lord Jesu, Who wast obedient unto death, grant us so to share Thy humility, that we may follow the example of Thy obedience.

Friday after the Second Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

AND there went out a champion out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. And he stood and cried unto the armies of Israel, and said unto them, Why are ye come out to set your battle in array? am not I a Philistine, and ye servants to Saul? choose you a man for you, and let him come down to me. And the Philistine said, I defy the armies of Israel this day.—1 Samuel xvii. 4, 8, 10.

THE Israelites were continually at war with their deadly enemies the Philistines. The two armies are now encamped over against each other. The Philistines pitched near Shochoh, while the Israelites encamped on the mountain opposite; a valley running between. Into this valley or wady the champion of the Philistines day by day descended to defy the armies of Israel. His vast stature, his brilliant armour, his defiant manner, all tend to terrify the men of Israel; who, "when they saw the man, fled from him and were sore afraid." Have we not here a picture of the great enemy of man defying the Church, and threatening to enslave it? He is "a strong man armed," and many a stout heart quails before him. But there is "a stronger than he." Just as David, who is a type of the Redeemer, conquered the champion and delivered his nation from the danger; so Jesus Christ bruised the head of the great enemy of man, took from him the armour in which he trusted, and rescues his people from his grasp. Still the victory is not complete; our great Champion has bruised the head of Satan, but He commands His Church to pursue after the enemy, and complete the conquest. As the men of Israel "arose and shouted and pursued the Philistines," so must the faithful arise and pursue the hosts of darkness. They compass us around. They tempt, they lure, they goad us into sin. Let us arise and resist them. Let us "smite them by the merit of Christ's holy Cross," and by the virtue of His risen life. Let us not shrink from the danger and the toil. "Peace shall follow the battle;" and the "end of sorrow shall be near His throne."

Saturday after the Second Sunday after Easter. Evening.

AND it came to pass, when David was returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, that the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of musick. And the women answered one another as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands. And Saul was very wroth, and the saying displeased him.—1 Samuel xviii. 6—8.

WE have here the beginning of Saul's lasting hatred to David. Jealousy was its first cause, because David was the beloved of the people. Saul becomes gloomy and morose. At last he begins to see that God has indeed rejected him; and a gloomy melancholy takes complete possession of him. The whole court is affected by Saul's evil temper; attendants, family, friends, all feel more or less his wrath. What a contrast to David! The reason of the contrast is best stated in the words, "The Lord was with David, and was departed from Saul." The Lord was with him in his youthful days at Beth-lehem. David seems to have loved Nature, because he saw God there. How full the Psalms are of Nature's testimony to the visible power of God; and how the sweet singer of Israel seems to have felt in his heart that Nature bore an equal evidence to God's love! Thus through His works, as well as His words, David learned to know God, to love and trust Him; and God in turn gives him wisdom and inward peace. Love to God works within him love to man. Love not merely to the friend who "loved him as his own soul," but even to his enemy. How kind, how loyal his conduct towards Saul! How constantly it was his effort to return good for evil; He "behaves himself wisely" towards him, and towards all men. How awful it is to grieve, to vex, to quench the Spirit of God! How blessed to have God's Spirit dwelling richly within us, teaching us to listen to God speaking to us; speaking to us in Nature; speaking to us through His inspired Word; speaking to us in the still small voice of conscience! Let us hear and obey.

The Third Sunday after Easter.

A LITTLE while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me, because I go to the Father. They said therefore, What is this that He saith, A little while? we cannot tell what He saith. Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask Him, and said, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see Me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see Me? Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.—St. John xvi. 16, 18—20.

WHEN these words were spoken shortly before the Saviour's crucifixion the disciples did not understand them; even when He was laid in the grave their meaning was still hidden from them. They did not then think that in a "little while" they should see Him again. They had taken leave of Him as they thought for ever in this world. But on the third day from the crucifixion the meaning flashed upon them. The "little while" had passed away, and they saw Him again; saw Him in His own loved person. Doubtless on the Day of Pentecost they felt that the words were fulfilled in a still deeper sense, when the Holy Spirit was poured out on them, and they saw Him after a spiritual manner in the power of that Spirit. How full of comfort to them must have been the memory of those words! Is there not a like comfort in them for us? The world indeed would wish to abide always; its treasures are here; its hopes of happiness are in earthly things; it grieves at the thought of all these passing away in a "little while." But we know that here we are but pilgrims; and that in a "little while" we shall enter within the gates of the everlasting city, whose builder and founder is God. The "little while" will have its completest fulfilment when He shall come again. We live in longing expectation "till He come." How blessed are these words, "Till He come!" We may well linger on them, think over, and ponder them, until in their light we shall clearly see

"How heaven and home
Lie beyond that 'till He come.'"

Monday after the Third Sunday after Easter. Evening.

SO David hid himself in the field: and when the new moon was come, the king sat him down to eat meat. And Jonathan arose, and Abner sat by Saul's side, and David's place was empty. And Saul said unto Jonathan his son, Wherefore cometh not the son of Jesse to meat, neither yesterday, nor to day? And Jonathan answered Saul, David earnestly asked leave of me to go to Bethlehem. And Saul cast a javelin at him to smite him: whereby Jonathan knew that it was determined of his father to slay David.—1 Samuel xx. 24, 25, 27, 28, 33.

HOW very beautifully does the inspired penman sketch for us the character of Jonathan! He loves David as his own soul, but he is concerned for the honour of his father, and must do his duty towards him. He is a good son. Amid many trying circumstances he is never found wanting. We hear no angry expressions from his lips; no harsh words in return for Saul's unkindness. It was long before he could be convinced of Saul's evil intentions towards David; he was loth to believe that envy and jealousy had completely changed his father's affection into intense hatred. It is a beautiful trait in Jonathan's character that he believes to the last in the uprightness of his father. He will not cease to believe in it, till the javelin which Saul had in his hand is hurled at his unoffending head. Then he rises sadly from his seat, and fulfils his promise to his friend by warning him of his danger. It is the Will of the Lord they should part: they must submit to that Will. One thing would comfort them in their trials, and in their separation: they were both convinced that the Lord they loved and served would cause all things to work for their final good. In the midst of suffering and disappointment, if we have the Lord for our God and trust Him, we may rejoice, for we shall be blessed; but if we live without God in this world, we may be possessed of all its riches and honours, as Saul was, yet we shall be miserable in ourselves, and make those around us unhappy. True happiness cannot exist where inward peace is absent.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

WHY boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually. Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully. Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness. Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue. God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, He shall pluck thee out of thy dwelling place.—Psalm lii. 1—5.

A PSALM written by David when he heard of the sad fate of Ahimelech and his household. It was David's falsehood that had been the first cause. He led Ahimelech to believe he was on some secret service for the king. Ahimelech gave him all he required, and helped him on his way. So far David's policy was successful; but, oh, how awful were the consequences! Saul, beside himself with anger, "devised mischief;" he "worked deceitfully." He sends for Ahimelech and his whole household, and, unmoved by his defence, commands them to be slain. How sad the evils which flow from falsehood! How earnestly should we pray God to set a watch before the door of our lips! The tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. Though a "little member," it can "set on fire the course of nature." Let us beware of uttering falsehood with our tongue. "Truthfulness is the basis of all moral goodness." Again, we should learn to watch over our tempers. Let us not boast that we can do mischief. The mischief we think to do against others will fall back heavily on our own heads. So it was with Saul; so it will be with all who repent not of their evil ways. David, though he sinned, yet he repented of his sin, and confessed it before God. Therefore he could acknowledge from experience that "the goodness of God endureth continually." He suffered indeed, but his trials were God's discipline by which He was training His chosen one for the place He intended that he should occupy. So it will be with all the faithful. The "devouring words" and "deceitful tongues," yea, all the mischief that ungodly men may devise against them, will work for their good, because they love God, and because the goodness of God endureth continually.

Wednesday after the Third Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

AND the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The Lord forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the Lord's anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the Lord.—1 Samuel xxiv. 4—6.

A TOUCHING picture of a truly forgiving spirit. Saul had done all in his power to make David his enemy. He left nothing untried that could excite in him a spirit of retaliation and revenge. He had "hunted his soul to take it;" yet David "rewarded him good." An opportunity is given David of ridding himself of his persecutor. David and his men are in a cave, dark as midnight within, the "keenest eye cannot see five paces inward; but one who has been long inside, and is looking outward toward the entrance can observe with perfect distinctness all that takes place in that direction." David from within sees Saul entering. He and his men dare hardly to breathe. The hour of vengeance is come. How strong the temptation! It seems for a moment that he will yield, and dye his hands in the blood of the anointed. But no, he does but take a proof which may afterwards testify to Saul that he had been in his power. Truly he forgave. He was "more righteous than" Saul. Saul's words were prophetical. The Lord did indeed "reward him good." The lesson of forgiveness is a difficult lesson to learn; but we must learn it thoroughly if we would be loving and faithful disciples of the Lord Jesus. He is our example in all things. He forgave His bitterest foes; and He has left us "an ensample that we should follow in His steps." Like David, like a greater than David, let us forgive from our hearts; that we may be able to pray with all earnestness, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us."

Thursday after the Third Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

NOW Samuel was dead, and all Israel had lamented him, and buried him in Ramah, even in his own city. And the Philistines gathered themselves together, and came and pitched in Shunem: and Saul gathered all Israel together, and they pitched in Gilboa. And when Saul saw the host of the Philistines, he was afraid, and his heart greatly trembled. And when Saul enquired of the Lord, the Lord answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.—1 Samuel xxviii. 3—6.

SAUL'S sad and disappointing career has nearly drawn to a close. The glory of his reign has faded away; and we see him now trembling and afraid because the Philistines have invaded the land. A dark cloud has swept over him and his kingdom. He longs for advice; but Samuel, to whom he could turn in former days, is dead, and the Lord will not be enquired of him. How dark, how mournful the close of this reign whose beginning was so full of promise! All that God could do for Saul He did; but Saul despised His warnings and "would none of His reproofs." When fear came upon him as desolation, when distress and anguish came, then he called upon the Lord; but "the Lord answered him not," because "he hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord." What a serious warning to the unrepentant! The Lord will "laugh at their calamity; He will mock when their fear cometh." Oh, how necessary is an early, a sincere repentance! When we fall into sin (and "there is no man that sinneth not"), let us return to our God in deep contrition. Let us pray to Him to fill our hearts with a sincere sorrow for sin; and for strength to free ourselves from its bondage. Sorrow for sin is needful for us all: "Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish." Not that our sorrow can in any way atone for our sins; but our love for God should make us continually grieve for the sins by which we dishonour Him. Let us seek to attain a penitential spirit by prayer and self-denial; and may the Blood of Jesus Christ cleanse and purify our hearts; and through the comfort of His grace, may we be strengthened to serve Him in every good work.

Friday after the Third Sunday after Easter. Evening.

AND David lamented with this lamentation over Saul and over Jonathan his son: The beauty of Israel is slain upon thy high places: how are the mighty fallen! Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were not divided: they were swifter than eagles, they were stronger than lions. I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasant hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women. How are the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!—2 Samuel i. 17, 19, 23, 26, 27.

THE news of the defeat of Israel and the death of Saul rapidly spreads. Many a heart is saddened, many a home rendered desolate; but no heart is sadder than that of David. He mourns over Jonathan and Saul with a lamentation than which there is none more touching, more sadly beautiful, in the whole Bible. He dwells upon their well-known valour and renown, grieving that the mighty should have thus fallen. He mourns most bitterly for his tried and firm friend: "I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan;" "thy love to me was wonderful." Again we have proof, if further proof were wanting, of the generous spirit of David. He does not rejoice over his enemy's death. His love is pure, disinterested. He can love his enemy as well as his friend, and mourns for both. His was that kind of love which our Lord tells us we all should have. What praise is due to us if we love those who love us? But if we love those who treat us unkindly, and strive to injure us, then we have something of the Spirit of Christ in us. He loved His enemies and prayed for them. Yea, while we were in our sins, and therefore enemies, He gave His life for us—for us and our salvation—to reconcile us unto our God. Oh, to be like Him; that we might love Him more, and love all men in Him! Oh, to have more of the Spirit of Christ in loving those who wrong us! Oh, for a larger heart to judge others leniently and ourselves severely, to help others out of sorrow into joy, and to lead them to know more of the love of God and the power of His blessed Spirit!

Saturday after the Third Sunday after Easter. Evening.

ABNER sent messengers to David, saying, Whose is the land? saying also, Make thy league with me, and, behold, my hand shall be with thee, to bring about all Israel unto thee. And Abner had communication with the elders of Israel, saying, Ye sought for David in times past to be king over you: now then do it: for the Lord hath spoken of David, saying, By the hand of My servant David I will save My people Israel out of the hand of the Philistines, and out of the hand of all their enemies.—2 Samuel iii. 12, 17, 18.

THE cause of Ish-bosheth, Saul's son, grows weaker and weaker, while that of David waxed stronger and stronger. It was the Lord's doing, for He had promised to rend the kingdom from Saul and give it to David. The final blow to the cause of Ish-bosheth was struck when Abner, who had been its mainstay, deserts it in favour of David. No cause can have any true stability unless favoured and blessed by God. The unrighteous and godless may appear to flourish,—all may seem to go well with them; and the true servants of God often wonder at the prosperity of the wicked, and feel for the moment ready to say, "Then have I washed in vain my hands in innocency." How often do we find this feeling given expression to in the Psalms! But their prosperity is only apparent. When we "go into the house of the Lord" we see for what purpose God suffered them to be raised to high degree. It is then we recognise the truth of the saying, "Unless the Lord build the house, their labour is but lost that build it." All that is done in the world without God, or contrary to His will, must come to a speedy end; but work that is consecrated to God will last, it will be built in into eternity. Oh, that we would wait more on the Lord! Oh, that we would consecrate our work to Him; that we might build on the good foundation good work that shall survive when this world is "melted with fervent heat;" work that shall "follow" us when we are gone to our home beyond; work which will help in building up the great spiritual temple unto God!

The Fourth Sunday after Easter.

NEVERTHELESS I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart. I will send Him unto you. And when He is come, He will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.—St. John xvi. 7—11.

NOWHERE in the discourses of our Lord do we meet the contradictions between Him and His kingdom on the one hand, and the devil and his kingdom on the other, so clearly and sharply set forth as in this parting discourse of Jesus with His disciples. It is only what we might expect. The words were spoken on the night of the betrayal; the night in which the last great strife between Him and the prince of this world began; that strife in which the serpent's head was bruised, and in which He Himself received a bruised heel. He knew well that when this struggle had begun, His disciples would be subjected to many sufferings through the power of the enemy. Therefore He dwells at considerable length on the contradiction between Him and the world, that they might be forewarned. The conflict He begins they will have to carry on. Not, indeed, in their own power: they will not be left alone. A Comforter will be sent them: One Who would convince the world of sin, of righteousness, of judgment. This all-powerful Comforter would help them to continue with success the fight which their Master had begun, and in which He had been victorious. It was on this account "expedient for them He should go away." For in going He would send this Comforter, even the Spirit of truth, in Whose strength they would be able to overcome. The Captain of our salvation conquered in the strife; but the struggle is still to be maintained. Though defeated in one battle, the enemy has still many resources. We have all a part to take in the strife. We must all be found fighting on the Lord's side until the victory is complete, and the whole force of the enemy vanquished.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter.
Evening.

THEN went king David in, and sat before the Lord, and he said, Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto? And this was yet a small thing in Thy sight, O Lord God; but Thou hast spoken also of Thy servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God? And what can David say more unto Thee? for Thou, Lord God, knowest Thy servant. For Thy word's sake, and according to Thine own heart, hast Thou done all these great things, to make Thy servant know them. Wherefore Thou art great, O Lord God: for there is none like Thee, neither is there any God beside Thee.—2 Samuel vii. 18—22.

A BEAUTIFUL touching prayer of David. Oh, that we could always pray with similar earnestness! There are times in every Christian life when prayer is difficult, when the heart seems cold, when there seems no flame, no fire, and when we cannot find words to express our thoughts. We should not, however, be disheartened. Before God is our desire; our sighing is not hid from Him, and He will answer our thoughts. At such times let us cry from our inmost souls, "Lord, give me a warm heart; give me a spirit burning with love to Thee." Again, there are hours in our communion with God in which the soul soars aloft with David, winging its upward flight; words come at will; our hearts are no longer cold. Prayer is then a real enjoyment. We rejoice to call God our Father; we rejoice to feel ourselves in His Presence; we rejoice to praise and thank Him. At such times with the eye of faith we seem to pierce within the veil into the very holy of holies, and get a brief foretaste of the happy communion which awaits us above. Both these experiences in prayer the Lord permits to His people, just as He sends sunshine and rain in Nature, and good and evil days in our ordinary life. They are meant to strengthen our faith, to make it grow and increase; that nothing may shake our confidence in God, nothing make us doubt His love to us, nothing interrupt our communion with Him.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter. Evening.

HAVE mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight: that Thou mightest be justified when Thou speakest, and be clear when Thou judgest. Hide Thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.—Psalm li. 1—4, 9—10.

THE Psalms of David are full of wonder at, and admiration for, the goodness of God. They speak to us also of the sinfulness of man, and the depths to which he falls through the awful power of temptation. But God does not forsake His chosen; hence the many expressions of sorrow and repentance, hence also the earnest desire for forgiveness. How earnestly David prays to be cleansed from his sin; to have a new heart created, and a right spirit renewed within him! In this Psalm we have the expression of David's sorrow when he had grievously sinned against God. He feels that it is against God that he has done this great sin; but at the same time he feels that he has given occasion to the enemies of God to blaspheme. Sin has a threefold power. It has power over him who commits the sin, injuring his soul, hindering its upward and onward course; it has also an injurious influence on the Church of God, for it gives the very opportunity which the enemies of the Church long for, to point the finger of scorn against her, because her members are found amongst the transgressors; and it causes grief and pain to our loved Master, Who through our sin is "crucified afresh." Let us therefore watch against the first motions of sin in the heart. Let us strive to overcome every temptation, and earnestly pray for the divine help and the renewing Spirit; that "our tongue may sing aloud for righteousness," and our "mouth shew forth His praise."

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter. Evening.

LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me. Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. But Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head. I cried unto the Lord with my voice, and He heard me out of His holy hill. I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the Lord sustained me. Salvation belongeth unto the Lord: Thy blessing is upon Thy people.—Psalm iii. 1—5, 8.

THIS Psalm was written by David when he was almost heartbroken at the desertion of his people and the rebellion of his favourite son. Absalom was ever a heartless, undutiful son. He early showed his revengeful spirit in slaying his brother Amnon; and he shows his undutifulness by flying from Jerusalem to take refuge with Talmai, king of Geshur, instead of submitting to his father's will. Notwithstanding his unfilial conduct, notwithstanding his wilfulness, David mourns for him and longs for his return. He clings to him, though unworthy of his love. David's love for the wilful, headstrong Absalom, is a faint image of the love of God for sinful man. We are wilful and headstrong; we flee from God's Presence; we refuse to submit ourselves to His all-holy Will; we even try to forget His existence. But God loves us. He longs for us to show some signs of contrition; He awaits us with open arms when we repent and return. There is One Who makes intercession for us—intercession far wiser and more efficacious than the intercession of Joab for Absalom. To His intercession God listens, and "devises means that His banished be not expelled from Him." For "Salvation belongeth unto the Lord; Thy blessing is upon Thy people." He hears, and saves, and blesses. How the thought of God's power and willingness to save must have comforted David in all his afflictions! The same thought may comfort us. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" We need not fear what man can do unto us. His blessing will be upon us, and upon all His chosen; upon all His blood-bought, beloved, chosen people.

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter. Evening.

ABSALOM rose up early, and stood beside the way of the gate: and it was so, that when any man that had a controversy came to the king for judgment, then Absalom called unto him, and said, Of what city art thou? And he said, Thy servant is of one of the tribes of Israel. And Absalom said unto him, See, thy matters are good and right; but there is no man deputed of the king to hear thee. And it was so, that when any man came nigh to him to do him obeisance, he put forth his hand, and took him, and kissed him. So Absalom stole the hearts of the men of Israel.—2 Samuel xv. 2, 3, 5, 6.

IT is almost natural to us to hate hypocrisy. Our better nature revolts against it. Our Lord's sternest denunciations were levelled against it. He uttered woe upon woe upon those hypocrites who pretended to be holy, when their hearts were far from God. He denounced those who made an outward show of goodness in order to hide the deformity of their inner man; who made a pretence of religion to win the confidence of unsuspecting widows and orphans, that they might rob them of the little they possessed. We see a similar hypocritical part played by Absalom. He bowed low in the presence of his father; but it was only to put him off his guard, that he might the more easily deceive him. It appears from Absalom's words that David was at this time displaying a want of energy in the government of his kingdom. It may have been from a sense of his own sin; a feeling that he had given his enemies cause to blaspheme the Name of God. Whatever was the reason, it is apparent that he neglected important duties. He held no courts of enquiry; he deputed no judge to sit in state at the gate of the city. Absalom takes advantage of this want of energy; he betakes himself to the city gate, sits there as a self-constituted judge, and by his hypocritical behaviour steals the hearts of the men of Israel. How odious is hypocrisy! It makes men as whited sepulchres: loathsome and corrupt within, while outwardly all appears fair and beautiful. "The heart of man can be a temple of the living God or a grave; a heaven or a hell."

Friday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter. Evening.

WHEN king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name was Shimei, and cursed still as he came. Then said Abishai, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the Lord hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? It may be that the Lord will look on mine affliction, and that the Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day.—2 Samuel xvi. 5, 9, 10, 12.

DAVID'S cup of sorrow is indeed full. His own son seeks his life, his friends desert him, and his enemies come boldly forward to attack and accuse him. Shimei doubtless felt bitterly the displacement of his family by David. Hitherto he feared to give expression to his feelings; but now that David is friendless and powerless he gives vent to them, and curses David to his face. His curses, instead of doing David injury, fell on his own head. This is ever the way with violence and insolence. They seldom injure those against whom they are used; but they fall with fearful force on those who use them. How worthy of himself and his confident trust in his God does David act! He recognises God's hand in all that he suffers, and prefers to bear in silence the insolent treatment rather than resent it. He felt he had sinned against God and man, and accepted this additional trial as part of his punishment. He bows humbly beneath the chastisement. "It is the Lord;" that is sufficient. He feels confident that in the end his afflictions must attract towards them the regards of His fatherly compassion. "The Lord will requite me good for his cursing this day." We have our times of sorrow, times of chastisement. We need not be discouraged. At God's right hand there is power and sympathy. Power to help and succour us in all our afflictions; sympathy, because we have an High Priest Who has been tempted in all points like as we are, and therefore can sympathise with us when we are tempted.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday after Easter. Evening.

AND the king commanded Joab and Abishai and Ittai, saying, Deal gently for my sake with the young man, even with Absalom. And all the people heard when the king gave all the captains charge concerning Absalom.—2 Samuel xviii. 5.

ALL the wrongs which David suffered at the hands of Absalom could not alter the intense love with which he loved him. "Deal gently," he says to the three commanders of his army, "with the young man, even with Absalom." When Joab, notwithstanding this strict command, thrust Absalom through with a dart as he hung in the oak, David mourned with a bitter mourning, and cried, "O Absalom, my son, would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!" If the poor love of a human father, which is but a faint shadow of the love of our Heavenly Father, could thus feel pity and compassion for the rebel who drove him from home and throne, and would also have deprived him of life; how much more will infinite love feel pity and compassion for us, even though we rebel! The very being of God is love. It is written, "God is love." How infinite is His patience! He bears with us though we rebel against His authority. Justice says, "Strike the rebel to the ground, clear him from the path;" but infinite love says, "Spare him yet a while, deal gently with him, he may repent and return to his allegiance." Oh, the love of God! how infinitely great! Surely we must be won over to a return of love and to obedience to His Will. Oh, that we would but let the blessed truth of the love of God for lost sinners entirely possess our souls! If any desire to know what it can be, let them ask for it. An earthly parent will not deny the request of his child; how much more will our Heavenly Father grant the request of His children who trust Him! The love of God is a boundless ocean, with neither breadth, nor length, nor depth, nor height. Let us trust our all to Him. He understands us and knows all our wants. He will think of us, care for us, shelter us here, and hereafter lead us to our home.

The Fifth Sunday after Easter.

BE ye doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. Pure religion, and undefiled before God and the Father, is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.—St. James i. 22—24, 27.

THE Word of God ought to be to men as a mirror, in which they may see themselves and recognise their faults, and so purify themselves. But just as we can use a mirror carelessly, soon forgetting the image we have seen represented, so we can use without profit the Word of God. This is what the apostle warns us against in the Epistle. The Word of God should enable us to renew our hearts, purify our affections, elevate our hopes, and bring us into close communion with God. If the Word of God has not helped us to do this, our reading of it has been in vain. It has not done its full work as a mirror; it has not accomplished its end, which is, not merely to point out our faults, but to point them out that they may be cleansed and purified. He who suffers the Word of God so to work in him as to purify his heart and change his life, he will be blessed in his deed; but the forgetful hearer leaves unused that which might have been a means of blessedness, and his religion is but vanity and a deception. Let us not deceive ourselves, or others in this matter. Our religion, if true, will show itself not merely in hearing, but in acting. We must ever be willing and ready to do little self-sacrificing acts of love, watching carefully our motives, doing all for God's sake. Such works so done are before the Father of lights, pure and undefiled. The Lord grant us the will and power to do them. The Lord grant that by the holy inspiration of His Spirit we may think those things that be good, and by His merciful guiding may perform the same; for Christ's sake.

THERE was a famine in the days of David three years, year after year; and David enquired of the Lord. And the Lord answered, It is for Saul, and for his bloody house.—2 Samuel xxi. 1.

THERE is much that is beautiful in the world. Who can help admiring the loveliness of Nature at this season? How thankful ought we to be to the Giver of all good gifts for all that is happy and beautiful in creation; thankful also that He has given us the power to appreciate His gifts, and use them in the service of the Giver! This evening, however, we read of sorrow and suffering, the result of "famine year after year." David, as was his custom, enquires of God the cause. The Lord answers, "It is for Saul, and for his bloody house." God had sent the famine into the land; but it was to punish the sins of the evil doers. How earnestly should we pray to be cleansed from sin ourselves, and that our fellow countrymen may repent them truly of their sins, and steadfastly purpose to lead new lives; that God may be pleased to bless our land! It is our sins which are the cause of our calamities. When we sin, God in mercy chastises. The suffering and sorrow is sent for a good purpose. But by our misuse of them we can make our very sufferings a cause of greater condemnation. St. Paul says to the Galatians, "Have ye suffered so great things in vain?" By refusing to permit God's purposes to be worked out in us by the suffering, we render it, so far as we are concerned, "in vain." God's holy purpose in sending suffering is to draw us nearer to Himself; to teach us our weakness, that we may depend more on His strength. When we suffer, let us draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to us. He will bless us by dwelling in our hearts. Oh, that our hearts were purer, that they might be fitter dwelling-places for the Most High! But not only will He bless us, He will bless our land. He will give us according to His promise all things necessary for our bodily sustenance. He will send us such seasonable weather that we shall receive the fruits of the earth to our comfort and to His honour.

GO ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.—St. Matthew xxviii. 19, 20.

WE have here the distinct command of our Lord to evangelise the heathen, to make known to them the glorious news of the Kingdom. If we had no other reasons, surely this one ought to be sufficient, that our Lord's parting words were, "Teach all nations." Thus it becomes a duty, the duty of the Church. In fulfilling this duty we should be in earnest: our prayers should be in earnest; our offerings should be given with the earnest desire that they be accepted of God and useful in the great cause; our efforts to help should be earnest. Likewise we should be thankful: thankful for the many proofs of the deepening of the spiritual life in the Church at home; thankful for the many openings afforded by an advancing civilisation of spreading still further the ramifications of the Church; thankful that in so many countries our Church is so well represented, having its house of God, its altar, its resident pastor, and the many attendant blessings and privileges. But success should ever call forth renewed efforts. Let us pray continually the Lord of the harvest to send more labourers into His harvest, and to put it into the minds and hearts of His people at home to help the good work by prayer, by gifts, and by consistent lives. While we praise Him for causing the bright light of the Sun of Righteousness to shine around and in us, let us humbly but earnestly beseech Him to enable us to reflect that light, to walk as children of the light, compassionating those who are still in darkness. Oh, that the whole Church at home were roused to a just sense of its responsibility, and that God would still further bless and prosper the labours of the Church in foreign parts! Oh, that He would give wisdom to carry on the good work wisely, courage to persevere in it undauntedly, and grace to bring it to a successful issue.

LET not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.—St. John xiv. 1—6.

WHERE the head is there ought also the members to be. Our Head is gone before us, but it is only to prepare a place, that where He is there may we be also. How cheering must it have been to His disciples to hear their Lord declare that in His "Father's house are many mansions!" The Saviour was preparing His apostles for His approaching departure, and tells them that in leaving them He is but moving from one mansion or room in His Father's house to another. That though withdrawn from their sight, yet He was not actually far from them; and that soon they should follow whither He had gone before, to occupy the places which He should prepare for them. Full of comfort must those words have been to the disciples, and full of comfort are they to us also. Our Master has ascended up on high; but He is not far from us. Meanwhile He has left His Spirit the Comforter to be our guide, and to direct us in the way in which we ought to go. His holy inspiration will enable us to think those things that be good; His merciful guidance will enable us to perform the same. In thus thinking, meditating, and working, we are advancing in the road which leads to our home beyond, where are those other mansions in our Father's house in which places are being prepared for all those who love their Lord's appearing. Do we dwell with pleasure on the thought of our Lord's appearing? If so, He is now preparing our places for us, and will come again, and receive us unto Himself; that where He is there may we be also.

Ascension Day.

WHEN they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when He had spoken these things, while they beheld, He was taken up; and a cloud received Him out of their sight.—Acts i. 6—9.

OUR Lord, in addressing His disciples for the last time on earth, speaks to them of the kingdom which He has just founded, and commands them to make known this kingdom and its laws in all the world, and to draw men into it by the preaching of the Word. His disciples misunderstand Him. They still think of an earthly kingdom, and therefore ask Him if He intends "at this time to restore the kingdom to Israel." They find it difficult to sever Christ's kingdom from the Holy Land. Jerusalem is to them the capital of the world. The heathen must come thither to worship. What is their Lord's reply? He does not withdraw the word kingdom. The kingdom has been founded. It was founded by Christ Himself in the call of the apostles. But it was a very different kind of kingdom from what they expected. It was a kingdom with no outward pomp; no outward glitter or show; no earthly display to attract. It was to be a kingdom ruling the hearts of men; a spiritual kingdom, drawing men from all nations and incorporating them; a kingdom in which He, though absent, would reign as King. Their duty was to work, to proclaim the kingdom, to win subjects. Their reward should be great. Here indeed they would suffer; but hereafter they should reign with their King in glory. Do we wish to reign with Him? Here and now we must in heart and mind ascend with Him, and continually dwell with Him. He will thus fit us for dwelling and reigning with Him throughout eternity.

AND He led them out as far as to Bethany, and He lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And it came to pass, while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven. And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.—St. Luke xxiv. 50—53.

IT was a moment of great blessing to the disciples when the Redeemer took leave of His own. Blessed moment! when, stretching out His blessing hands, He lays them on the heads of the weak pilgrims. Far different was this blessing from the blessing of one who, in dying and in taking leave, calls his loved ones around him to bless them. Here is not one dying, but living. His is not a request or prayer, but the bestowal of a most precious gift. Who can measure the fulness of grace which lies concealed in the blessing of Christ?—fulness of grace not to His disciples only, but to us also, even to us, "upon whom the end of the world is come." The glorified Saviour still stretches out His hands from the heavens; still He blesses; still He gives without measure the gift of His Spirit. How thankful ought we to be for the Ascension! We ought to make it a subject for continual thanksgiving and meditation. The thought of our Lord ascending where He was before should make us take off our eyes from the petty vanities of this short and uncertain life, and fix them upon things which belong to the life above. The Ascension completes the life of the Redeemer on earth. We cannot understand that life without this conclusion to it. Indeed, His whole life prepares us for this conclusion. For His whole life, what was it? Was it not a continual Ascension? He Himself compares His life to the heavenly ladder of Jacob's dream. All His thoughts, His words, His acts, pointed upwards. His one desire was that souls should be helped and aided in their upward journey. Oh, that we all may be amongst those who are making rapid progress, climbing step by step the true heavenly ladder by which alone we may reach our home eternal in the heavens!

WHO shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek Him, that seek Thy face, O Jacob. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of glory.—Psalm xxiv. 3—10.

WHO can help seeing in these words a graphic picture of our blessed Lord's glorious Ascension? He, and He alone, could through the innate cleanness of His hands and the purity of His heart ascend into the hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place. This ascended Saviour is declared to be the King of glory, the Lord of hosts, King of kings and Lord of lords. But there are other gates which must be opened wide to admit the Lord of hosts. The King of glory stands at the door of our hearts. He demands admittance. He knocks that we may open. Let us not hesitate to admit Him. Throw wide open the gates of our hearts, for the King of glory brings much with Him, and He must have the whole heart prepared for Him. See the blessedness of those who admit the King of glory. He will always dwell with them in this life, and when He comes again at the last great day to judge the world, they, in whose hearts He has dwelt, will "receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of their salvation." Here He will create a new heart and right spirit within us; through faith in His atoning sacrifice we shall be renewed day by day in the inner man, our hands shall become cleaner, and our hearts purer. In the end we shall follow our Saviour's blessed footsteps, and climb the "hill of the Lord, and stand in His holy place."

Sunday after Ascension Day.

WHEN the Comforter is come, Whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me: and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning. These things have I spoken unto you, that ye should not be offended. They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service. And these things will they do unto you, because they have not known the Father, nor Me. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.—St. John xv. 26, 27; xvi. 1—4.

THE disciples of our Lord are still waiting in earnest expectation of the fulfilment of the promise of their ascended Master. Lonely indeed must they have felt when that Master was taken from them, when the cloud received Him out of their sight; but not lonely in the same sense as when He was parted from them by the Cross of Good Friday. Though absent, they now know He lives; yea, they know that it is only in outward appearance that He is absent. He is with them in spirit, and will be always with them and with His Church, even to the end of the world. When parting from them He promises a Comforter. Hitherto all His promises have been fulfilled, His slightest word has ever come true; and they feel confident that this, His last promise, will likewise be fulfilled. They are assured that the promise of the Father will soon be sent; therefore they wait in daily expectation of some fresh revelation. Though lonely, they can rejoice. They rejoice in the final triumph of the Lord; they rejoice in the hope of sharing this triumph with Him hereafter. Have we not a similar cause for rejoicing? The Ascension of our Lord is a pledge of our ascension. Have we not still greater cause for rejoicing? The Spirit has descended. He dwells in every faithful heart. If we take heed to ourselves not to grieve the Spirit, He will comfort us here, and hereafter will exalt us into the same place whither our Saviour Christ is gone before.

LIKEWISE the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And He that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because He maketh intercession for the saints according to the Will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God.—Romans viii. 26—28.

THE Almighty at times appears as though He did not hear our prayers, to teach us patient waiting and perseverance. Sometimes, however, our prayers are left unanswered for another reason. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought," and therefore frequently ask such things as are really injurious to us. Such requests God denies us for our good. "So find we profit by losing of our prayers." It is our own fault that we ask unprofitable things. True, we know not what we should ask. But the Spirit maketh intercession within us. If we listened to the Spirit's intercession we should only ask for things which should be for our real good; for our true spiritual well-being; for things "according to the Will of God." Thus, one thing we may pray for without hesitation is a will at one with God's Will; a will to do His Will here as it is done in heaven. We can also pray that God will be our defence against all our spiritual enemies; that He will be our shield and great reward. If we so pray in accordance with the Will of God, and with the mind of the Spirit, praying always in the Saviour's Name, nothing doubting but that He will most surely keep and perform His promise; we may rest assured our prayers will be heard and answered. We may be certain, yea confident, that God will grant whatsoever we ask according to His Will and in His dear Son's Name. Prayer is indeed a blessed privilege. Let us see that we use it aright. Oh, that the Holy Spirit may help our infirmities by teaching us both the matter and manner of prayer; that our prayers may be answered, and that all things may work for our good!

WHO shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.—Romans viii. 35—39.

HOW firm was the great apostle's faith! What certainty he had of the love of Jesus Christ his Saviour! Every true Christian ought to have as firm a faith, ought to trust in the Redeemer with the same bright confidence, assured that nothing can detach him from that Redeemer's love. Our adversary is always instilling doubts into our hearts; but instead of being conquered by him, we may be "more than conquerors through Him Who loves us." We may remain on the field pre-eminently victorious, while the enemy is routed and vanquished on every side. So long as we stand fast in faith and love, so long as we cling close to the Captain of our salvation, nothing can separate us from His love. The adversary, who strives to come between us, will again and again be defeated. How full of gratitude should our hearts be! The love of God in Christ Jesus should beget love to Him in return. His love is so great that nothing can separate us from it; neither life, nor death, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor any other creature. Oh, how great the love of Him Who fought for us and our cause! Nothing can make it fail. And now, He Who fought our battles here below pleads for us in those courts whither He is gone before to prepare a place for those who fight and conquer, that they may enjoy the full and completed results of His great victory. Great indeed is the love of Christ! Well for us if we suffer our hearts to be altogether possessed with a sense of this His love.

AND every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: but this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.—Hebrews x. 11—18.

JESUS Christ is our High Priest. He is the Priest Whom we and the world require; a Priest Who is holy, harmless, undefiled, and Who can enter into the immediate Presence of the invisible God. Oh, how the good news ought to stir our hearts within us, and lift our thoughts to where He sitteth at the right hand of God! Since the Ascension, which was the crown and completion of our Lord's earthly life, He is passed into the heavens, there to dwell, having entered in once for all. Through Him we have the forgiveness of sins; our sins and iniquities will be remembered no more. What a priceless gift has our Saviour won for us—the forgiveness of sins! Who can tell the value of this gift? What would we be without forgiveness? We must all confess that we have sinned; we must all acknowledge that we have left much undone that we ought to have done, and have done much that we ought to have left undone. If, then, we had no High Priest, no one who had entered within the veil for us, how could we ever get rid of the burden of our sins? We could not lift off the load from our own shoulders; our fellow-men could not help us. Thanks be to God, Jesus has entered within the veil, and won forgiveness for all our sins which we have repented of; and where there is "remission of these," there is no need of any further "offering for sin."

AND you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.—Ephesians ii. 1, 2, 4—6.

WHAT valuable lessons, and what important points of doctrine are here brought out in high relief! First, it is distinctly shown that though the service of sin may appear to be a free service, it is in truth the most abject slavery. Again, the kingdom and power of Satan are put forward in all their fearfulness; and there is a distinct statement of our moral corruption, and our natural alienation from God. Then, again, we see the exceeding riches of divine grace, and the tender love of God in that, while we were yet sinners dead in trespasses, He quickened us into life. How blessed the privileges of Christians! They have the love and grace of God to depend upon; and if they abide in His love they shall sit in heavenly places. Christ on the right hand of God; they in the places prepared for them: and all by grace, for "by grace are we saved through faith." It is not through our own power or goodness; all human boasting must be silent before the all-merciful love of God. It is God's love that has united us to Christ; it is God's love which makes this union between Christ and His Church effective and eternal; and it is God's love that makes this union between Christ and His Church the pledge and ground of our present spiritual and future bodily resurrection and ascension. May God Who so loved us as to send His Son to destroy the power of Satan and to win eternal life for us, so fill us with divine grace, that we may avoid every temptation, and walk worthy of our Christian calling; that hereafter we may sit with Christ in heavenly places in His eternal and everlasting kingdom.

O LORD, how manifold are Thy works! in wisdom hast Thou made them all: the earth is full of Thy riches. Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created: and Thou renewest the face of the earth. I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.—Psalm civ. 24, 30, 33.

THE apostles of our Lord were in an attitude of expectation during the ten days which succeeded His Ascension. As we draw nigh to the great festival of the Spirit it is well that we should place ourselves in a similar attitude, and await and expect a more abundant outpouring of God's gracious gift. At such a time as this we should try to make ourselves more familiar with the great work which the Spirit of God accomplishes in the world. For this purpose we should search ever deeper and deeper into God's Word. As we do so we find that the Spirit occupies Himself and interests Himself not only with the spiritual life of man, but also with his external and what we call his natural gifts. He works in Nature, bringing order out of disorder, beauty out of chaos. Everything around us reminds us of this. Every blade of grass, every fair flower, every rippling brook and flowing river is an outward and visible sign of the nearness of God, Who "sendest forth His Spirit, and they are created." It is the Spirit of God that "renews the face of the earth," just as it is the Spirit of God that renews a right spirit within us. It is well for us to trace the Spirit's work in both the natural and spiritual kingdom; in the tender green blade, and the first tender motions of the soul towards its God; in the ripening harvest, and the fullgrown spiritual man ripening more and more into the likeness of his Maker; in the gentle dew of Summer, and the dew of God's grace. Thus, wherever we may be, we shall bear about with us a sense of the near Presence of God. We shall feel that His Spirit is brooding over us, and over all things in creation. The world will be to us a real temple of God, and the Holy Spirit dwelling in it, the Lord and Giver of life.

NOW therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in Whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.—Ephesians ii. 19—22.

WE cannot help remarking how much the Holy Spirit has to do with that building which, "fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in the Lord." It is "in the Spirit" that we are being "built together for a habitation of God." God wills to have a dwelling-place in which He may dwell tenderly, joyfully, lovingly. The Church is that dwelling-place. In the Church God dwells through His Spirit. Do we try to realise the greatness of our privileges as members of the Church? How great, how glorious are these privileges! Do we try to grasp fully the glory of the dispensation in which we live? Why is there not more enthusiasm about heavenly and spiritual things in our hearts? It is because we do not sufficiently realise the supernatural glories amid which we live and move. If we take a low view of the presence and the gifts of God within and around us, we shall be starved and stunted, instead of becoming "fullgrown men," and attaining unto "the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." But if we fully grasp the position in which God has placed us, then "we all with unveiled face reflecting as a mirror the glory of the Lord are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." If we live up to our high calling, "we, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." May He Who bestowed on us so many singular gifts bless to us these gifts and privileges, that they be not to our greater condemnation, but to His glory and to our spiritual and eternal well-being.

Whitsun Day.

WHEN the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues, like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them: and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.—Acts ii. 1—4.

WE may learn lessons of wisdom from every word in the Epistle for to-day. It was when they were assembled for the purpose of worshipping God that the Holy Spirit was poured out. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves in the house of God. God will meet us there; and our prayers, offered in faith, will draw down blessings on ourselves and on the whole mystical body of Christ. The "sound" was heard by all, but it did not make the same impression on all. How often does the sound of the Gospel penetrate the outward ear, without ever being heard by the soul dead in trespasses and sins. The Spirit came "suddenly," at a time when He was unexpected. The visitations of God are mostly unforeseen; they come at a time when we least expect them. He came "from heaven." "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights." He came as a "rushing mighty wind." Let us earnestly desire that the Spirit may be breathed into our souls; that we may have the true breath of life, that we may live for ever. He "filled all the house." So when the Spirit dwells in our hearts He takes entire possession. He suffers nothing to share it with Him. He came as fire. Those who have the Spirit must "let their light so shine" that they may enlighten others. They must have a burning zeal for the glory of God. The fire within them must burn out all their sins, and consume all that is evil. As the Spirit sat on each of them, so He remains now as an abiding Presence in the Church, moulding each member into the likeness of the Son of God.

GOD so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already; because he hath not believed in the Name of the only-begotten Son of God.—St. John iii. 16—18.

HOW infinitely great is God's love to man! It is beyond our comprehension. "God so loved the world." He loved it beyond measure: and we are now what we are because God loved us; because He gave, long years ago, His only-begotten Son to die for us, yea, to rise again, and ascend into the heavens; because He gave His Spirit to dwell in His Church. The same Spirit now dwells in the hearts of His faithful people. The Presence of God the Holy Spirit within us is a wonderful truth. He knows our inmost desires. He is in the secret of all our movements, of every tendency to good or evil. He hears and knows our very thoughts before we ourselves are altogether conscious of them. Are we grateful to God for all His love for us, all His care of us? Are we following the motions of His good Spirit? Are we obedient to Him? or do we ignore Him? Do we act contrary to Him? Do we vex and grieve the Holy Spirit? These are questions of much seriousness. We ought to be able to answer them. If we have surrendered ourselves to God, we shall acknowledge ourselves to be His; and by word and deed strive to glorify Him Who has so loved us as to give His Son for us, and send the light of His Holy Spirit that we might have a right judgment in all things. Let us submit ourselves willingly to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. With His assistance we may know the truth, and find ourselves strengthened and comforted. May He Whose descent we now commemorate teach us to follow the holy suggestions which He breathes into our hearts. May He perfect in our souls the work He came to do.

HE that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.—St. John x. 2—4.

JESUS Christ is the Good Shepherd; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture. As an Eastern shepherd knows his sheep, calling each by its name, so our Good Shepherd knows us individually from the least to the greatest. Each has his own name, each has his own place in the family of God. The Good Shepherd protects them and provides for them, not only because they are His property, but because He loves them. He protects us when assaulted or tempted. He provides both food and shelter. In this great truth lies the hope of our continual renewal. If we stray, wandering into unknown pastures, we have this assurance that the Good Shepherd will follow and search till He find us. This is our strength and perseverance. We are weak, unable to protect ourselves; but our Shepherd is strong, and He will suffer no hostile foe to overcome us so long as we trust to His guidance. Blessed truth of the sufficiency and faithfulness of our Shepherd; would we but let it possess our hearts! At times, indeed, the way in which He leads us seems long, the ascent difficult, the path wearisome and rough. But let us persevere; our Shepherd knows all our difficulties, and will not suffer us to succumb. The discipline of trial and sorrow is good for us. It is by this means amongst others that God trains His elect, that when the time of our probation is ended we may be found meet for the inheritance. We cannot expect to be altogether free from the "changes and chances of this mortal life;" but we may feel assured that our burdens are nicely fitted to the capacities which are given us to bear them. The Almighty, Who knows better than we what is good for us, has ordered them with a view to our eternal happiness. Let us honour Him by trusting Him, by submitting ourselves to Him, and by allowing Him to be the Educator of our lives.

BELOVED, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world. Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.—1 St. John iv. 1—4.

THE office of the Holy Spirit is to help us to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ, and, loving Him, to confess Him by word and deed before men. In loving and confessing Jesus Christ our spiritual life will grow and increase; for in loving Him we shall become more and more like Him. It is one of Nature's laws that we grow gradually into the likeness of those we intensely love. Therefore if we love God we shall become like Him. We cannot love God without the Spirit of God dwelling in us. If the Spirit be dwelling within, we shall be able to overcome every obstacle that stands between us and God. The prince of this world himself shall not be able to hinder us in our loving approach to our Creator and Redeemer; for "greater is He that is in us, than he that is in the world." And we should remember that each obstacle that is overcome brings us nearer to our God; and as we get nearer to Him, we grow more into His likeness. Let us endeavour then, in the strength of the Holy Spirit, to overcome every obstacle and hindrance which separates us from our Saviour, every fault which bars the way to our perfection. Thus we shall "follow on to know the Lord," until at last, seeing Him as He is, we shall be made like Him. Here we grow gradually into His likeness by yielding ourselves to the impulses of His Spirit and surrendering our wills to His guidance; hereafter by possessing and being possessed by that same mind which was also in Christ Jesus.

THEN they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls. And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God, and having favour with all the people.—Acts ii. 41—47.

BEAUTIFUL picture of the first congregation in Jerusalem. Here we see Christian faith in the Communion of Saints on earth put into practice, and we seem to hear the words re-echoed again and again in every heart, "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." They are all brethren, members of one great family. A loving union ruled everywhere. Notwithstanding temptations from within and without, they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and were bound still closer together with that great bond of union—the frequent celebration of the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ. As we think of the unity, peace, and blessedness that existed in that early Church of Jerusalem, when the people ate their meat and partook of their food with gladness and singleness of heart, do we not long for the time when there shall be true union and united action amongst Christians? Shall we not pray that as there is one Spirit reigning and dwelling in the Church, so all members of the Church may be united in following the Spirit's motions? Let us strive after a truer union, that we may all be one in faith, one in doctrine, one in love; praising God, worshipping one Father, one Lord of all, "daily in the temple" set apart for His worship, and "at home" with those who live together with us; that God may be truly worshipped, and we and our fellowmen built up in our most holy faith.

Friday in Whitsun Week.—Evening.

HEAR me when I call, O God of my righteousness: Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for Himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto Him. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? Lord, lift Thou up the light of Thy countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.—Psalm iv. 1, 3, 6, 7.

THERE are hours in our lives so precious that we never can forget them. Hours in which the grace of God has been especially busy with us. Hours in which the Spirit of God has been enlightening the eyes of our understanding. Hours in which God Himself has been making known to us heavenly truths, by opening up to our rapt vision a heaven full of love and blessedness. Such hours had St. Peter when he heard his Lord's voice saying unto him, "Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou Me?" Such hours had the jailor in Philippi when he heard the apostle's answer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved." Such hours had Cornelius when the angel said to him, "Thy prayers and thine alms are gone up for a memorial before God," and when the Holy Spirit was poured out on him and on his companions when they heard and believed the word spoken by St. Peter. Such hours abide in the memory. We feel that the Lord has "enlarged us;" that He has "lifted up the light of His countenance" upon us; He has "put gladness in our hearts." The richer our life is in such hours the more blessed is it. They are spring messengers of a better time, earnests of a glorious future. When such hours come to us let us mark them well, and remembering the word, "The Lord will hear when we call upon Him," let us grasp firmly the proffered grace in prayer; and like Jacob at Peniel let us wrestle with God, and not suffer Him to depart till He blesses us. Then we may "lay us down in peace and sleep," for it is the "Lord only Who can make us dwell in safety."

AND when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on Whom they believed.—Acts xiv. 21—23.

THIS is the first passage which speaks of the ordination of elders. It was necessary that elders should be ordained in every city, otherwise the labour of the apostles would have been lost, and the disciples would have been in danger of lapsing into the heathenism which surrounded them. The elders were ordained to have the oversight of the Churches founded in each city. Those who had been brought to a knowledge of the Saviour needed teaching and edification; this the elders who represented the more settled and domestic work of the ministry would be able to impart; they would also be responsible for the proper conduct of the Church's services, and the right dispensing of the Sacraments. The subject reminds us that on the morrow elders, that is, presbyters or priests, will be ordained for the continuous care and shepherding of flocks committed to them. It is the Church's part and duty to pray that they may be true followers of Christ, good shepherds, ready and willing to spend and be spent in the service. We should pray for the bishops, that they may make choice of fit persons to serve in the sacred ministry. We should pray for those who shall be ordained, that they may be endued with the Spirit of Christ to set forth the glory of the blessed Trinity both by their life and doctrine, and be the means in God's hands of winning many souls, and setting forward the salvation of all men. Let us use this privilege in our private as well as public devotions; that the Church may be blessed, and a great work done by the united action of bishops, priests, and deacons on the one hand, and all her faithful lay members on the other.

Trinity Sunday.

AFTER this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither. And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And round about the throne were four beasts full of eyes before and behind; and they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.—Revelation iv. 1, 2, 6, 8.

WE can never thank God sufficiently for the revelation He has made concerning Himself, and what He has done and will yet do "for us men and for our salvation." These revelations He has made in various ways. All Nature is a revelation of God. As we look upward to the skies we find God there, we see and feel His power. Our conscience is a voice of God speaking to us. Conscience tells us that God is just. But we want to know more of God than either Nature or our own inner consciousness can tell. We want to know if God loves us, if He interferes and interposes on our behalf. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable mercy. He has been pleased to reveal even this to us. He has not left us in doubt. He has uttered His voice from heaven; He has given us a spiritual revelation, a Gospel which meets all our needs and answers all our questionings. This Gospel is "a voice as of a trumpet speaking with us." It says, "Come up hither;" come up out of the tumult and dust of earth and earthly things, into the calmness and repose of spiritual things. Let your communion, your "fellowship be with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ." They will show us those things which our spirits long to know. Then, as we become more "in the Spirit," we shall become convinced that God does think of us. The Cross of Calvary declares His love for us. His thoughts towards us are very gracious. Oh, that we would give more heed to the revelation which God has made to us of Himself! Let us bow our heads, and say, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God, the Almighty, which was, and which is, and which is to come."

FOR we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—2 Corinthians iv. 5, 6.

THE ever-blessed Trinity! How great is the mystery contained in these words! There is something very solemn, very awful in the expression. When we try to realise the truth contained in it, we feel like a little child on some lofty mountain-peak, where there is no sound of human voice, no sign of human life. The scenery may be unspeakably glorious; but what matters it to the child that the sky is magnificent, or the landscape broad and beautiful? The child only feels its loneliness, feels utterly desolate: it longs for some human hand to touch, some mother's arms in which to nestle with a sense of rest. Now this is something like the feeling which comes over us as we think of the Trinity. God, the uncreated Creator of the heavens and the earth, seems so far off; the glory which surrounds Him seems to remove Him so far from our range and sympathy. We long for something we can touch and understand; something that will give back to our hearts the throbbing desire for sympathy, love, and friendship. The Almighty knows our wants, and has provided the means for supplying them. The glory of God, so solemn, so awful, has been revealed to us in the face of Jesus Christ. God the Eternal, the incomprehensible, comes to us with a human heart and human sympathy to win us from earth to heaven. Jesus Christ, though true God—blessed be His Name—was yet true man, with all the tenderness of a woman, all the gentleness of a mother clasping her little child to her arms when it is frightened. In Jesus Christ we can know something of the glory of the Father, for he who has seen the Son has seen the Father also. Thanks be to the Triune God Who causes the light to shine out of darkness, that He has "shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

WE are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.—2 Thessalonians ii. 13, 14.

THIS is one of the many passages of Scripture in which the doctrine of the Trinity is expressed as a substantive truth. Here we are told that God the Father chooses, God the Son saves, and God the Spirit sanctifies. A deep, awful, mysterious doctrine, but at the same time an eminently practical one, calculated to confer many and great spiritual advantages. What could we do without the Trinity? How could our souls be saved without each Person in the Trinity? We feel our wants, we long to have them supplied. But how can we approach God? Have we not offended Him? Is He not justly incensed against us? We tremble at the thought of appearing before an angry God. True, but in Jesus Christ God is our Father. We may come to Him with more confidence than a child comes to an earthly parent. Through the human nature of Jesus Christ we are closely united to God. He loves us. Even though we sin against Him and heaven, He loves us, and provides a means whereby we may attain unto glory. By what means may we attain unto glory? The Second Person of the Trinity provided the means when He died "for us, and our salvation." The Saviour died that we might live. But life means more than mere existence. It means strife with sin, growth in holiness, hatred of evil, and love of all that is good. How can man, who has such an evil nature, love goodness? The Third Person of the Trinity gives us the power. It is He Who sanctifies. It is He Who instils into our hearts good desires and holy thoughts. It is He Who gives us the power to carry out our good resolutions into actions. Let us thank God for thus providing the way of salvation through Christ, and let us yield ourselves to the holy influences of His Spirit, that we may be sanctified and made meet for our inheritance.

BE perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.—2 Corinthians xiii. 11, 14.

AGAIN we are met by the doctrine which this season brings so forcibly before our minds. The apostle invokes the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, placing them all on a perfectly equal footing. "Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost; the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God." We might dwell long on the passage before us, and yet not exhaust all its beauties and depth of meaning. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" the unmerited favour by which we have been reconciled to the Father; the grace of Him Who is our Brother,—a Brother loving and beloved, Who undertook our cause, paid the full ransom for our souls, and pleads successfully for our restoration and acceptance. "The love of God." Oh, how great is His love for us! Still there are many who feel discouraged, who are unhappy and downcast, because they doubt the fact that God loves them. They know how great is their guilt in the sight of God, and ask almost despairingly, "What right have I to God's love?" God's Word speaks so expressly, that all doubt as to His love should be cast aside as utterly unworthy. We are told that while we were yet sinners, God loved us; He has given proof upon proof of His love. He sent His only-begotten Son to suffer and die, that sinful man might live and reign. With His Son He gives us all things necessary for our bodily and spiritual wants. Let us not doubt, but look upwards, and, as we think of His mercy and goodness, confess, "My Father loveth me." "The communion of the Holy Ghost,"—blessed Communion, blessed fellowship! In what a spirit of thankfulness should our souls ascend to the Triune God! Oh, let us thank Him for the grace He bestows upon us, for the love with which He loves us, for the blessed communion and fellowship He permits to us!

AND God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness. So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.—Genesis i. 26, 27.

THIS passage teaches us that there is in the divine unity a plurality of Persons. We hear them, as though they took counsel together, saying, "Let *Us* make man in Our image, after Our likeness." As in the redemption of man the Three Persons of the Godhead were engaged; so in the first creation of man the Three Persons take counsel together, and then the Triune God creates "man in His own image, in the image of God created He him." We naturally desire to know what is meant by the statement, Man is made in the image of God. We gather its meaning from the passage in which we are told that when God created man, "He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Thus in spirit man is Godlike. It is not in bodily form that he is like unto God, for nowhere are we told that bodily form or outward manifestation is essential to God. It is in his spirit that he is Godlike. Many passages in the New Testament explain this. We are told to put on "the new man, which after God"—that is, in God's likeness—"is created in righteousness and true holiness." The divine image which was originally given to man at creation, the life of the Spirit, the divine life, is restored to all who are born again in Christ Jesus. St. Peter, when speaking of the promises of God, says, by their fulfilment we may be "partakers of the divine nature;" that is, we may be partakers of all the perfections of the divine character. The first Adam was highly privileged, being created in the image of God. The privilege of the Christian is equally great. He is born anew into all the privileges of our first parents. Therefore our Lord exhorts His hearers to be "perfect, even as their Father in heaven is perfect." He would not exhort us to attempt an impossibility. Therefore let us strive after perfection. "Be ye holy, because God is holy."

AND the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle: and I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel.—Genesis iii. 14, 15.

WE have here the first promise of a Saviour. No sooner had man fallen than God declares to him that he has devised means to raise him from his fallen state. In this prophecy is contained the whole Gospel—the birth, death, strivings, and victory of Jesus Christ, His mastery over Satan, and the destruction of Satan's power. How it must have been mighty to dry the tears in our first parents' eyes! This promise must have been to them like a bright star in the dark night; it must have raised them up, as upon angels' wings, over all that was oppressing them and weighing them down. Oh, how their hearts must have been lifted up in praise to God! We too have cause to bless and praise God. The prophecy has been fulfilled, His promise kept. He has sent His Son, Who, in shedding His Blood upon the Cross, bruised the serpent's head and broke his power. But while praising God for His goodness, let us not forget there is work for us to do. Satan's head is bruised, but not utterly crushed; his power is weakened, but not altogether destroyed. We do not need any elaborate argument to prove this. So long as sin is in the world, and misery and suffering, so long we may be assured the power of Satan remains. The tempter still tempts; the serpent still bruises Christ's heel; for whatsoever is done unto the least of His brethren is done unto Him. We, then, must be fellow-workers with God in completing the victory over Satan. What an important task lies before every member of Christ's Church! We may each of us, by a liberal spirit, by good example, by encouraging all that is good and opposing all that is evil, personally contribute in promoting the great work whose foundations were laid on the Cross at Calvary, and whose fulfilment is a solemn charge laid upon the Church at ·rge by our divine Lord and Master.

YE are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.—Hebrews xii. 22—24.

HOW many and blessed are our privileges in the Church of Christ! As we dwell on the greatness of our privileges let us not forget that our condemnation will be proportionately great if we refuse to hear the voice of Him Who speaks. Cain had fewer privileges, yet he was justly punished for his awful sin. Much more shall we be punished if we sin against the bright light which shines around. We, through the waters of baptism, wherein we have been born again of the Spirit, have been introduced into the spiritual Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem. Though still on earth our names are written, enrolled in heaven; and an "innumerable company of angels" are "ministering spirits sent forth to minister for" us. Instead of the blood of Abel, which for vengeance pleaded to the skies, bringing down the just judgment of God upon Cain, we have the "Blood of sprinkling," through which the Kingdom of Heaven was opened to all believers. The blood of Abel convicted Cain of sin; the Blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. Well may we say that our privileges are many and blessed. Let us take the more earnest heed unto ourselves, lest, surrounded as we are by privileges, we fail to attain to that perfection to which the voice of Jesus is calling us. If Cain escaped not when he fell into sin, how shall we escape if we neglect to make use of our privileges, and refuse to hear Him that speaketh from heaven. It is God Who speaks, saying, "What more can I do for my vineyard," the Church? The Three Persons in the Blessed Trinity have shared in the work of fencing it round; they have supplied all that is necessary to render it fruitful. Oh, that every member of the Church were a fruitful branch in that vineyard, bearing much fruit to the glory of God!

The First Sunday after Trinity.

BELOVED, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.—1 St. John iv. 7—11.

HOW is it that amongst those who try to live a spiritual life we find so many sad, so few joyful? Is it not because of a divided heart? In which do we take most pleasure, in loving communion with God or in communion with the world? Which is the true element of our lives, the Lord our God or the world? It is one of the most important questions we can ask ourselves, To whom does our heart belong? It is a question we cannot afford to neglect asking and answering. Man's heart is bound to earth with a thousand threads. When one is broken, the others strengthen themselves for resistance. True, as time passes and old age draws on they become finer and less apparent, but they do not therefore become weaker. In fact they become more dangerous, for the thinner and more refined they become the more easily are they overlooked. How needful the question, Whither inclines our heart? Where does it seek rest and peace? The more our connection with the world and its ambitions is loosened, and the more inward becomes our communion with Him Who is love, and Who loves us, the more blessed shall we be. Let us not doubt God's love. He has manifested it in many ways. If we dwell in love, we dwell in God and God in us. If we love God we must love our fellow-men. Hatred and love cannot exist together in the same heart. If hatred against our brother rules in the heart, the love of God must die. If the love of God rules, hatred must die. The more we love God and the brethren, the more shall we rejoice and be glad.

Monday after the First Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight. Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.—St. Matthew xi. 25, 26, 28.

If we desire to profit by what we read, and carry out into practice the doctrines which our Church teaches, we must become as babes, i.e. meek, humble, teachable. But, alas! we live in an age when human wisdom and the thoughts of the learned are esteemed very highly, and extolled. Our great temptation is to consider ourselves "wise and prudent;" to trust to our own learning, and to lean upon our own efforts after wisdom. So we become inclined to think disparagingly of the means by which God has revealed His Will, and the apparently simple part He has appointed for us in "working out our own salvation." Our Lord warns us here against this spirit of pride; He tells us that it is to babes God reveals His Will: and if we would learn the things concerning Him we must humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand. We must empty ourselves of many of our own thoughts and imaginations, if we would be filled with the teaching of the Word of God. It is an old proverb, "He who has his hands full can receive nothing." We must come as empty vessels to be filled with the fulness of God. We must confess that the Scriptures are a deep sea, and we destitute of a sounding line to fathom it; then God will give us the means by which we may dive into its depths. Then our intercourse with God will be blessed; He will reveal more and more of His truth, and help us to attain to that "new life where sin shall be no more." Our course here will be one of joy, for we shall hear the voice of Jesus bidding all the weary and heavy laden to come to Him; and we can trust Him to give us the promised rest.

Tuesday after the First Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AS touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren which are in all Macedonia: but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more; and that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without.—1 Thessalonians iv. 9—12.

ST. PAUL bids the Thessalonians study quietness. They should seek to be often alone with God. God meets us in solitude. Solitude has been well called "The audience-chamber of God." The Psalmist seems to have had this thought in his mind when he said, "Rest thee still in the Lord," or, as the margin has it, "Be silent before the Lord." In silence of spirit God speaks to us, and we see how He deals with us. One of the greatest dangers to the spiritual life in our day arises from the busy restlessness which meets us everywhere. We scarcely give ourselves time to think, and to ponder God's Word. Look at our great Example, the Son of God Himself. His life was a busy one, but He ever finds time to withdraw into stillness and silence for prayer and communion with His God. He spent whole nights on the lonely mountain height far from the busy crowd. See, too, how He feels that rest and quiet were needful for His disciples. Hear Him as He speaks, "Come ye apart, and rest awhile." Let us study to be quiet, that we may learn of God what He will have us to do. Then, in the silence of our own thoughts, we shall be "taught of God." We shall be taught by Him practical lessons useful for our daily lives when we have again, after our communion with God, to enter into our ordinary duties with our fellow-men. We shall be taught to "walk honestly;" to be true and just in all our dealings; to love one another; to do unto others what we would they should do unto us. We shall "do our own business" in singleness of heart, knowing that God's eye is upon us, and increase more and more in faith and love.

Wednesday after the First Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

TO every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; a time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance.—Ecclesiastes iii. 1—4.

THERE is a set time in which everything should be done. Not only each day, but each hour has its own work. How careful we should be to arrange well the hours, seeing each hour has its own responsibilities. We should note beforehand the duties and engagements of the day, that all things may be done in their own proper time. "Each hour is an angel who offers his service to us." If we use this gracious offer aright, it will be a witness favourable to us in the great day of our Lord's appearing; refuse the offer, and it becomes our bitterest accuser. Never put off to-day's duties till to-morrow: to-morrow always brings with it its own duties; and if to-day's be left undone they will probably continue so. Above all things never put off or curtail the time for prayer. A man overpowered with work may be tempted to do so; but Luther tells us the more time he spent in prayer the better he was able to do his work. Be sure of this, that time spent in holding communion with our Father in heaven is never lost or misspent. Martha showed much devotion to the Lord by her busy, active service; but one thing failed her. So full of care and trouble was she that she could not find time to sit at her Master's feet. She was so "encumbered about much serving;" she forgot to listen to His words. Without prayer work is vain, and time is lost. Work to be true must be consecrated by prayer. Therefore let us begin the day with prayer; a thousand times during the day let us recall our wandering thoughts and lift them upwards, asking for a blessing on our work; and let us close each day with praise for God's goodness, and prayer to Him to receive us again under the shadow of His wings.

Thursday after the First Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me. Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear my voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me. Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee: He shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.—Psalm lv. 16—18, 22.

In order to profit by the Word of God, and to be cleansed from our daily infirmities, we need prayer; prayer in the truest, deepest sense of the word. The young especially need to be thus warned. The love of active employment makes them think lightly of this solemn duty. And yet, as has been truly said, "Days without prayer are days without life." And see what David says, "As for me, I will call upon God; evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud." We are altogether too lukewarm, too remiss in making use of this great privilege. Even the heathen and Mohammedans put us to shame. The Mohammedans call prayer the "support of religion and the key of Paradise." The thoughts of the heart they call the "life and spirit of prayer." Five times in the day they bend the knee in prayer; and their Sultan must rise with the sun, to call upon God before he enters on the business of his kingdom. The heathen too are zealous in prayer. The Hindoo deems it a sin to eat bread in the morning before prayer. Now, though there is much that is superstitious, much that is perverted in these devotional exercises of the heathen, still their zeal condemns our coldness. We who have more light should be more zealous; yet who is there among us that must not with shame confess that often prayer is cold, and his worship formal? Why should it be so? Why should we suffer it to continue? Why not say with David, "As for me, I will call upon God; evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray." God will hear us when we thus "cast our burdens on the Lord." He will sustain us, nor will He ever "suffer the righteous to be moved."

Friday after the First Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

NOW therefore hearken unto Me, O ye children: for blessed are they that keep My ways. Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors. For whoso findeth Me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord. But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death.—Proverbs viii. 32—36.

WE have here another practical duty enjoined on us, the duty of waiting. We have seen the need of watching and prayer: waiting is no less needful. All of us wait for something. One waits for an inheritance which he expects; another waits for a return for his labours, hoping soon to be enriched by them; others wait for times of pleasure or amusement. All such waiting is of little profit. If we suffer ourselves to be guided by God's Word we cannot be ignorant of the proper object of waiting. Again and again we are commanded to wait on God, and blessings are promised to those who thus wait. Here we are encouraged to wait at the doors of wisdom. It is but another way of expressing the thought to which the apostle gives utterance, "Wait for His Son from heaven, Whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." We cannot help being struck by the frequent repetition of the command in the New Testament to wait for Christ and His coming. How shall we wait? First, by giving ourselves wholly to God. When once we have done this with a clear conscience and a steadfast purpose of obedience, we will find a sense of rest coming over us. This rest will still all passion, and steady the mind, and prepare our hearts to receive what God is willing to give. Then we shall ever be anticipating the second coming of our Lord. Just as when one expects a friend due preparation is made for his reception; so we shall prepare our own hearts, and help in the preparation of the world for the second coming of our best Friend, the Friend that loveth us more than a brother. If we be filled with the true spirit of waiting we shall fulfil all our external duties without losing the spirit of interior calmness.

Saturday after the First Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own Name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are. I have given them Thy Word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil.—St. John xvii. 11, 14, 15.

WHEN speaking of ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in this world, we should try to have definite ideas as to what we mean by "the world." This we can ascertain only by listening to the teaching of Holy Scripture. We are there told that the world hates Christ and His disciples, that it is an enemy of God, an enemy of goodness. Everything that draws our thoughts away from God, for example, unscrupulousness in seeking riches, honours, pleasures; a disregard for other men's interests, an immoderate cleaving to the things which are passing away, is part of this world's system. Thus we see that those things which ought to be used for God's glory and man's eternal interests may be turned to the very opposite purpose, and made enemies to all righteousness. How necessary to examine closely, as in God's Presence, how we stand with respect to the world and worldly things! Are we being kept by the power of God from the evil which is in the world? Let us search into our inner hearts, and discern our motives in all things. If many talents have been entrusted to us, with what object do we use them? Is it to gain the world's applause, or is it that God may be glorified? What most engrosses our mind and heart? What is our chief aim and object? Such questions as these will soon convince us whether or not we are belonging to the world. If as yet we cannot answer these questions satisfactorily, let us not be discouraged. The change cannot be effected in a moment. Let us watch against evil habits, and pray for strength to overcome the world and root out its spirit from our heart. Let us wait on the Lord, and He will give us opportunities of serving Him, and of acknowledging Him before men.

The Second Sunday after Trinity.

MARVEL not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.—1 St. John iii. 13—16.

THE essence of Christianity is self-denying love, which leads to life. The essence of the world is hatred, and leads to death. The hatred of the world has always the savour of death, for "murder is the feeling of hatred carried out into its extreme though unavoidable results." The Christian turns with fear and horror from such, and seeks the circle of those who practise love after the example of Him Who loved even unto death. In this circle no one is scorned, none oppressed; the bruised reed is not broken, nor the smouldering flax quenched. In this circle the sad are comforted, the erring brought back, the hungry fed, the naked clothed. Here is love, and in this love is life. Do we belong to this loving circle? or has the world, with its self-seeking and savour of death, claimed us as its own? Does the love of God dwell in our hearts? If so, what proofs do we give in our life and conversation of this in-dwelling love? Are we willing to spend and be spent in God's service? St. John does not shrink from speaking of things under their true names. He is very bold, and uses plain language. To the man who is wrapped up in self, who deliberately shuts up his compassion from his fellow-man, and will not trouble himself about his neighbour, he speaks with all the boldness we might expect from the son of thunder, and says, "Thou art a very Cain amongst thy brethren; thou art of that wicked one." God grant that we be not numbered amongst such. God grant that we may ever be living Christians, proving by a life of self-denying, self-sacrificing love that the Spirit of God is dwelling and working within us.

Monday after the Second Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

NOT every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the Will of My Father which is in heaven. Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.—St. Matthew vii. 21, 24, 25.

IT is of vast importance in our daily walk that we suffer a hallowing remembrance of the sacred services in which we engage to make a deep and lasting impression on us. They are meant to strengthen our faith and make our inward and outward life more conformable to the rule of God's Word. It is of little use our crying, "Lord, Lord," and then going on our way and forgetting what we have said, or for what purpose we have cried unto the Lord. The homage of the lips is a mockery, unless at the same time we yield our wills to the Will of our Heavenly Father. We must prove the earnestness of our prayer by the obedience of our lives. It is the same with hearing the Word of God. The time spent in listening will be lost, unless we yield a willing obedience to its precepts. When we hear God's Word we should meditate on what we hear; we should think of the goodness of God in giving us that Word. What is man, that He should be so mindful of him? Think of God's power, wisdom, love, and let these be incentives to us to love Him more and more. We should show our love not by hearing His sayings only, but by doing them. How much lies in those apparently simple words, "Doing the Will of My Father!" Active service and patient endurance. Active service on behalf of our fellow-men; watchful to take advantage of the many little opportunities God provides: patient endurance of suffering, calumny, slander; making no answer save by a holy life. If we thus hear and act we shall be building a house on a rock, which nothing can overthrow, but which shall endure throughout all eternity.

Tuesday after the Second Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

I AM the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.—St. John xv. 1, 2.

WITHOUT Christ, that is, apart from Him, separated from Him, we can do nothing. Apart from Him we never can meet the demands obedience makes on us. But if we are abiding in Christ as the fruitful branch abides in the vine, if we are drawing our life and strength from Him, then we can do all things. If Christ be ours, all that belongs to God is ours: His strength is ours; His spirit is ours; the divine life is ours. To do His Will is no longer a hardship, it becomes a delight. We feel that we can make St. Paul's words our own, and say, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." How blessed then to abide in Christ, to claim the gift of the Spirit, to glorify our Father which is in heaven! It is only through the Spirit we can glorify the Father; and to have the Spirit we must abide in Christ. A branch ruthlessly torn from the parent stem withers and dies; it can no longer bear fruit. As in Nature, so also in the kingdom of grace. If we, the branches, be separated from Christ the true Vine, we can no longer bear fruit nor bring any work to perfection. So long as we abide in Christ His strength is ours, it penetrates each member of His Church. Just as the sap circulates through every branch to the most remote and weakest tendril, so each member who abides in Christ is quickened and made fruitful to the glory of the Father. This is a truth which needs to be impressed upon us. It is the tendency of human nature proudly to trust in self; and yet we have no power in ourselves to help ourselves. Apart from Christ we are powerless for good; united to Him we can do all things. We can pray in the hour of trial, watch against temptation, and stand firm in the day of battle, till we gain a complete victory over all our enemies.

Wednesday after the Second Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

JESUS cried and said, He that believeth on Me, believeth not on Me, but on Him that sent Me. And he that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me. I am come a Light into the world, that whosoever believeth on Me should not abide in darkness.—St. John xii. 44—46.

JESUS Christ is the true Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He enlightens the human reason which was darkened since the fall of man. The Saviour scatters the darkness, just as the rising sun scatters the mists. Great indeed was the darkness of human reason. Man was ignorant of himself, ignorant of his relationship to God, ignorant of the duties he owed to his fellow-man. The true Light shone into the world to enlighten our minds, to make us know ourselves and our own weakness, to make us know more of God and His greatness. We have no strength, no power, no life in ourselves. From God, through faith in His Son, we derive all our strength and power, and the light and understanding necessary to make use of them. As God in the beginning gave the word, "Let there be light, and there was light;" so He speaks to the human soul, and causes light to shine out of darkness. What is the effect of sunlight? Does it not glorify everything that loves the day? The birds greet the rising sun with their songs. The flowers and leaves turn themselves away from the darkness, and lift themselves up towards the light. What the sun is to the material world that Christ is to the spiritual world. Where He shines there is peace and blessedness; sorrow ceases, night vanishes, day dawns, darkness flies away. Happy they in whom Christ shines. Their growth will be apparent. As the flowers need the sunshine to make them develop their full beauty, so the soul needs the Sun of Righteousness and His divine light to cause it to grow in grace. Would that all hearts would admit the light, that the time might soon come when all the children of God will be brought into the glorious light of His kingdom, into the living presence of that Sun which shall shine for ever, and never set.

THURSDAY AFTER THE SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.
EVENING.

BEHOLD, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me.—Revelation iii. 20.

THESE are the words of the Lord Jesus, spoken out of the invisible world. They tell us of a spiritual supper, a great feast which the Almighty prepares for His people. Invitations to this feast have been given over and over again. But now Christ Himself comes; He stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks. He says, "The feast is prepared, the banquet which the prophets foretold so long ago is ready; I am here to give you all its blessings." This is the voice we hear, now in His Word, now through His Spirit. Again and yet again He calls. It is our blessedness if, hearing the voice, we open up the door and as He enters sink at His feet and beg for communion with Him. Then He will come in with us and go out with us. He will strengthen our understandings that we may understand those things which otherwise would remain secrets of His kingdom. He will purify our thoughts and imaginations from vain or sinful day-dreams, and make us take a delight in the glorious view of heavenly things which His Word opens up. He will also go out with us; out into the work of our calling, whatever it may be; out with us into the cares and anxieties of the external world; with us in our strivings with the flesh, the world, and sin. How blessed the invitation, "Come nearer unto Me, and be more holy; be at rest!" At rest! is it not rest we all long for? But how shall we be at rest? We shall feel that we are forgiven; that we are reconciled to heaven, to God, and to ourselves. We shall feel the warm beams of the Sun of Righteousness warming our cold hearts, and read the hidden things of God by His light. Thus we have peace and a sense of rest here; and these are earnests and pledges of that joy and rest at the heavenly spiritual supper of the Lamb hereafter to which His chosen are called.

Friday after the Second Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

FOR the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works—St. Titus ii. 11—14.

THESE words declare the wonderful power of grace. This power is twofold. Grace saves us from the power of sin and the penalty of sin. It saves us from the power of sin by "teaching us," and enabling us to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts." It is through grace we are able to "cast off the works of darkness." It saves us from the penalty of sin: "By grace are ye saved;" for "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." How full of comfort are these words! Our salvation is the work of divine grace. We are not left to ourselves or our own devices. As God made us, and not we ourselves, so God re-creates us. The new birth of the Spirit originates with Him. We are "born not of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Then, when we are thus born from above, we hate sin, and refuse as worthless the gratifications of our fleshly lusts; we live "soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." We follow on in the path of duty, doing those good works for which we are created. We are ordained for our works, and our works are ordained for us. While walking in the path of duty we should "look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The thought of the near approach of our Lord should stir us up to a life of obedience. Is it for us a strong motive? Are we living lives of holiness, circumspect in our conduct, kind and considerate towards our neighbours, loving and obedient towards our God? Do we show a good example in our homes and in the little things of our daily life? Are we striving to be useful, doing what we can to glorify God and advance His kingdom?

Saturday after the Second Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

ALSO I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God.—St. Luke xii. 8.

THE Lord demands of us confession of Him before men. We must allow that it is a most natural demand; for of whom the heart is full, of him the mouth speaketh: and St. Paul adds, "with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." St. Peter felt it impossible to be silent: "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Do we, when duty and opportunity call on us to speak, boldly confess the Lord Jesus; or do we close tightly our mouths, "loving the praise of men more than the praise of God." This injunction of the Lord goes deeper than mere confession with the lips; it includes confession by a life of steadfast, consistent, Christian conduct. For such a confession we want our whole soul and spirit to be warmed with a burning love for the Saviour. We want the fire of divine love to be kindled in our hearts. How can our hearts remain cold when we think of what He has done for us? He has redeemed us: shall we not bless and praise His holy Name? He sought us out when we went astray: shall we not follow in His footsteps? He has given us His Word: shall we not listen to its precepts? When we forsook Him He did not forsake us: shall we not then confess before men what great things the Lord has done for us? Let us not be turned from this confession of our Lord by the fear of what people will say. We know well that it is easy to call men hypocrites; and we know also that there are many who do make a profession, but whose lives are not consistent. But this is no business of ours. Because there are inconsistent Christians, is that a reason why we should not be good Christians? If some do deceive, that is but one reason more why we should set an example of what a genuine Christian is. Let us obey our Master's commands, and be ready to confess Him with our mouth when necessary, and confess Him always by our daily conduct and conversation, by our consistent walk before our fellow-men.

The Third Sunday after Trinity.

LIKEWISE, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you.—1 St. Peter v. 5—7.

THE key-note of the Church's teaching this day is humility. In the first lesson Hannah declares the blessedness of the humble. In the Gospel the Saviour sets us an example of humility in eating with the publicans and sinners. The Epistle enjoins humility as one of the most needful of Christian virtues. It bids us "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God," and in our dealings with our fellow-men to be "clothed with humility." St. Peter addresses his Epistle to the strangers scattered throughout various nations; and doubtless in the position in which they would find themselves they would have much to bear, many trials and temptations to endure. Therefore the apostle says, "humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God." Be content with the position in which He has placed you; it may be a very lowly position, a position of difficulty and danger: "humble yourselves," do your duty in the lowly position in life, and in "due time He will exalt you." You appear lonely and deserted: it is only appearance, you are not really so. The Almighty sees you. He knows what is best for you; and no burden shall be put upon you greater than you can bear. If cares and anxieties from without assail us, we can cast all these cares upon Him. Nothing from without is of any danger to us if the heart be right within. If we are sober and vigilant we need not fear the adversary. Though he be strong, there is One stronger than he, Who will defend us. Though he goes about as a lion seeking its prey, our Shepherd will not suffer one of the flock to be seized. The "God of all grace will, after we have suffered awhile, stablish, strengthen, settle us," that we may stand as men, as heroes, as trees deeply rooted, as walls built on a good foundation.

Monday after the Third Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

DRAW nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He shall lift you up.—St. James iv. 8—10.

THESE words speak to us of humility, watchfulness, and believing, trustful hope. In times of sorrow, when our joy is turned to heaviness, we should submit ourselves to God. From Him comes everything: poverty and riches, joy and sorrow, life and death. He permits the storm to sweep over the deep, and the snow and frost to chill the earth, and the lightning to destroy in the land. If we be His true children, we shall submit ourselves to His will and trust in His fatherly wisdom. Trouble and affliction should make us "draw nigh to God," and then "He will draw nigh" to us; and we shall be able to say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted." Such humility will beget watchfulness. We must watch, that we may be able to "resist the devil." He is as active now as in the days of our forefathers. Night and day he watches his opportunity, and if he can he will slay our souls. In adversity he will whisper, "God cares not for you; He does not pity or help you; of what use then is your piety?" In prosperity he will say, "You have everything you can desire, therefore you do not want God; you can get on without Him." We know our danger; let us watch against it. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." Think of Him Who fought and conquered; think of those who through Him have also won the victory. A believing, trustful hope will be the result. Never cast aside hope. It is a gracious messenger which says, "There is no night which is not followed by the morning; no winter which is not succeeded by spring." So likewise for the faithful: there was never a sadness which God did not relieve at the proper time; never a tear which God has not dried when the fit hour came. Let us be joyful in hope, as well as patient in tribulation.

Tuesday after the Third Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

REMEMBER the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; how that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.—St. Jude 17—21.

IN this passage we have a picture drawn for us of a loveless, selfish character, and also of the true Christian in whom love for his Master lives and burns. Loveless, selfish men are always murmurers and complainers. They have no inner peace, no joy in God. They are like trees planted on hard stony ground from which they can draw no nourishment. They are only happy when they are speaking of their own deeds or hearing about them from others. They walk after their own lusts; they set their hearts on mammon; their treasures come from earth and are of the earth. They gather together only that they may have, or that they may spend on their own sinful desires. They care not about the wants of others. They shut up their compassion from them lest generosity on their parts might interfere with their pleasures. They "make a mock at sin," and separate themselves from all that is good. Becoming more and more sensual, they at last quench the Spirit Who was within them. Turn to the other picture: "Ye beloved, building yourselves on your most holy faith," learning precept upon precept, laying line upon line. The faithful build themselves up "in their most holy faith;" now in solitude, through still communion with God; now in public, by prayer in the family and in the temple of God, and by assisting at the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, which is the centre point of our religion. Their growth will be manifest both in love for the brethren,—they will compassionate some, try to save others, "pulling them out of the fire,"—and also in personal purity: they will "hate even the garments spotted by the flesh."

Wednesday after the Third Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

EXAMINE yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? But I trust that ye shall know that we are not reprobates. Now I pray to God that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates. For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth.—2 Corinthians xiii. 5—8.

SELF-EXAMINATION, which the great apostle of the Gentiles here insists on, is a most important duty. It is a practical duty we can never afford to neglect. At the close of the day we should find a quiet moment to place ourselves in the Presence of God, to look within and examine our motives and conduct. We should search and try whether during the day we have been cold in our prayers, indifferent in the matter of holy things, or unfaithful in the discharge of our ordinary duties. We should mark wherein we have failed, and above all ask ourselves whether we have dishonoured God or our Christian profession in thought, word, or deed. All this we should do not as a mere matter of form, but as in the Presence of God; that we may behold the evil which is within us and try to correct it, and the love of God and praise Him for it. Even a heathen writer saw the importance of frequent self-examination. He says, "Let not sleep seize upon the regions of the senses before you have three times recalled the conversations and accidents of the day." This duty is as necessary for advanced Christians as for those still weak in the faith. No day passes in which idle words or vain thoughts have not sullied the fair whiteness of our robes. Let us therefore practise self-examination. As we look within, if we find we have made some progress, let it not be matter of self-glorification; give the glory to God alone. If we find we have fallen back, let us not be discouraged; but in the power of God's Spirit make fresh efforts to attain to holiness.

AND the four and twenty elders and the four beasts fell down and worshipped God that sat on the throne, saying, Amen; Alleluia. And a voice came out of the throne, saying, Praise our God, all ye His servants, and ye that fear Him, both small and great. And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.—Revelation xix. 4—6.

PRAISE is the highest kind of worship that can be offered to God. It is the worship of heaven. The angels, the seraphim, the saints praise Him, while they ascribe glory, honour, and power to Him Who created all things. "As in heaven, so on earth." If it is God's Will that He should be praised by the angels in heaven, it is likewise His Will that His people should praise Him on earth. If it be our earnest desire that God's Will be done here on earth as it is in heaven, daily praise will ascend from each of us to God. The "great multitude" around His throne are possessed with a praising spirit; their voice is "as the voice of many waters, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Shall not we, His people, members of His Church, who enjoy so many and inestimable privileges, be ever possessed with a like praising spirit? In how many ways is it possible for us to praise the Lord! We may praise Him in His temple, extolling Him, exalting Him above all others, giving expression to our admiration of all His attributes; we may praise Him by telling of His greatness and goodness to others, and thus endeavouring to win them also to praise the Lord; we may praise Him by tracing to His Almighty hand whatever measure of success we have had in any enterprise; we may praise Him by ascribing to His goodness and mercy every escape from danger. Thus we may always be possessed with a praising spirit, and be fit at all times to join with "angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven" in lauding and magnifying His glorious Name.

Friday after the Third Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

SEARCH the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me: for he wrote of Me.—St. John v. 39, 44—46.

DILIGENCE in the study of Holy Scripture is closely connected with self-examination. We cannot examine ourselves without knowing what God's Will concerning us is; and we cannot know His Will except through His Word. It is also closely connected with prayer and praise. Without spiritual life in the soul true praise can never rise to God; but the spiritual life cannot be vigorous and strong without the nourishment God provides through His Word. This nourishment must be taken regularly; not by fits and starts. If the body is to continue in health it is necessary that regularity should be observed in partaking of food. So also the soul must be regularly fed with the food provided by the Word of God, if it is to reach that perfect state for which it is destined by the Almighty. When we approach God's Word we place ourselves in God's Presence. If we cause a deep silence to reign in our hearts we shall hear Him speaking to us. He speaks to us of His love; of the power of the Saviour's Cross; of the sweet comforting influence of His Spirit. Holy men of old were inspired for this very purpose, to write of Christ and His work. They wrote that we might know and believe. To know, we must search. Let us then "search the Scriptures," that we may be helped on in the path of holiness; that our affections may be quickened, and our hearts stirred through the knowledge of the love of God. Let us search them that we may be led to give ourselves wholly to the Lord, and offer up from purified hearts prayers and praises to Him Who is the centre and core of the Bible, the very pith and marrow of God's revelation, even Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

Saturday after the Third Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THEREFORE leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.—Hebrews vi. 1—3.

WHEN we have made a good beginning in learning the art of holy living, we must not rest or fall back or become slothful. We must strive after perfection. Perfection can only be attained by practice and perseverance. We are now in the school of Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith—the two graces "required of persons to be baptised"—are the terms upon which we have been admitted to this school, which is the Church of Christ. We have been advanced to the upper forms in that school through the rite of Confirmation. The education we received in our early years, and the preparation wherewith we were prepared for Confirmation, fit us to take our part as fullgrown men in the Christian Church: "therefore leaving these principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on to perfection." We must not be always laying the foundation, we should follow "them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." They laid a good foundation, but they were not always engaged on the foundation; once laid they went on to perfect the building. Let us lose no time, but work that we too may be built up in our most holy faith. Let us perform "labours of love" for the Church by "ministering to the saints." Let us seek the glory of God in all we do or say. Let us strive to edify others, and influence them by our conversation and example. We shall receive the blessing which God promises to those who use well the gifts which He showers upon them. Well for us if our hearts, softened and rendered productive through the rain and sunshine of the Saviour's love, bring forth good fruit unto perfection. He will bestow on us the blessing of peace, joy, and holiness here, and eternal glory hereafter.

The Fourth Sunday after Trinity.

I RECKON that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.—Romans viii. 18, 19.

THAT there is much sorrow in this world needs no proof. We have but to look around us, and sorrow and affliction meet us on every side. If as yet we have met with no trouble ourselves, we cannot expect to be long exempt. It is the lot of all men born into this world to meet with some grief or sorrow in their path through life. To the true Christian it is matter of rejoicing, for he knows that it is necessary to suffer with Christ in order to partake of His glory. The worldling, in whom the Spirit is quenched through the power of the flesh, has no such hope. Sorrow to him is sorrow, and nothing else; pain is pain, and has no bright side whatsoever. It is far otherwise to the true Christian. He knows that suffering borne with patience and intelligence has a good influence on himself, on the Church, and tends to glorify God and the Lord Jesus. It has a good influence on himself; it compels him to consider the state of imperfection all things here below are in, and makes him look forward with "earnest expectation" to the time of the "manifestation of the sons of God." Thus the suffering is a messenger from on high drawing his thoughts and hopes upwards. It has an influence for good on the Church, for in some mysterious way our sufferings "fill up that which is lacking of the afflictions of Christ for His Body's sake, which is the Church." Our sufferings at times are sent not altogether for our own sake, but in the interests of the Church at large. Christ is pleased through His oneness with His people to count their suffering as His own. When suffering comes, when God lays His hand heavily on us, let us suffer patiently and cheerfully; and our affliction will work out for us an "exceeding and eternal weight of glory," when our Redeemer, our "joy bringer," returns to take His own to Himself.

Monday after the Fourth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, and Thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that Thou shouldest give reward unto Thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear Thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.—Revelation xi. 16—18.

ST. JOHN in his First Epistle says, "perfect love casteth out fear." Here he says, God "rewards those that fear His Name." The distinction lies in the difference of meaning we attach to the word fear. There is a fear which hath torment; a fear which holds us in bondage, and makes us slaves. The love of God casts out such fear as this. Again, there is a fear which is quite consistent with love. The two, love and fear, may, nay must, dwell in the same heart. Do we not fear and love our earthly parents? Do we love them less, because we pay them a due reverence on account of their superior power, knowledge, wisdom, authority? If it be so in the case of our earthly parents, how much more in that of our heavenly Father! Consider how He deserves to be loved and feared. Think of His power, His holiness, His goodness and righteousness. His perfections are without number or measure. Shall we not, then, bow before Him in holy awe? Do we not owe Him both love and fear in consideration of what He is? The more we love God, the more shall we "fear His Name." As our love grows, so will our holy reverential fear of His attributes and character. This holy fear will cause us to attach importance to the least of His commands. We shall fear to grieve Him by breaking any one of them. Thus we shall be preserved from sin, and our "fear of His Name" will draw us closer to Him in the bonds of a childlike love.

Tuesday after the Fourth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

GOD hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His Presence. That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.—1 Corinthians i. 27—29, 31.

WE have no strength of our own; but this is no reason why we should not work for God. He supplies the strength. It is when we acknowledge our weakness that we are strong. It is our own fault if we remain weak. God never gives a command without also giving the power to obey the command. He bids us "be strong," and at the same time He bestows strength on all who come to Him acknowledging their want of strength. God never demands of His people what they cannot do. He commands us "to confound" the wise and mighty of this world; we cannot do so in our own strength, therefore He gives us the wisdom and the power. We need to be ever reminded that the strength which He gives is not ours, but His only, lest we should "glory in His Presence." If success make us self-confident, God hides His grace for a moment. He leaves us to ourselves, at once our enemy prevails. This is God's way of humbling us in our own conceit, and teaching us that without His grace we are incapable of accomplishing the least of His commands. Humbled, we again fly to Him. We lift up our hands as Moses did in the battle with Amalek, and the forces of the enemy are put to flight. Then we are compelled to give Him the glory. It is He, not us, Who confounds the wise and mighty of the world. We are His instruments, mighty instruments so long as we trust in Him. When we see the work He has given us to do being accomplished, let a ceaseless song of praise arise to God, "according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."

Wednesday after the Fourth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

BRETHREN, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.—Philippians iii. 13, 14.

ST. PAUL trusted in God; he distrusted self. Trust in God and distrust in self must always go together. Wherever we find the one, there we shall be sure to find the other. So when we read that St. Paul trusted not in his "own righteousness, which was of the law," we expect him to tell us in what he did trust. We are not disappointed; he tells us that he trusted in "the righteousness which is of God by faith." His distrust in self made him long to know more of Christ, to know Him in the "power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings." Then trusting in Him he could "forget those things which are behind;" forget past failures, lest he might be weakened in running his course by the thought of his many falls; forget past attainments, lest they might become food for vain confidence. He forgets both in order to "press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God." Our lesson this day from St. Paul's words and example is contained in these two words, "Trust God." Trust Him to teach us; trust Him to arm us, trust Him to aid us. If there be any difficulties in our path they may be easily cleared away by a reverent contemplation of the infinite wisdom and power of God, and by the consideration of His love and the Love of His Son. If our Shepherd spared no pains to find His wandering sheep, shall we not learn to trust Him as we rest in His sheltering arms. No one ever trusted God and was forsaken. As we think of the work we have to do, its difficulty and importance, let us consider our weakness; this will make us abandon all confidence in ourselves, and compel us to turn to the divine wisdom, goodness, and power, to work in and with us "both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

Thursday after the Fourth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because Thou hast judged thus. For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink; for they are worthy. And I heard another out of the altar say, Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments.—Revelation xvi. 5—7.

THERE are places where the echo from the rocks and mountains around are borne back to us in clearer and louder tones than the voice which originally called it forth. The angel's words of praise appear as echoes of the Psalmist's words, "Righteous art Thou, O Lord, and upright are Thy judgments." The angel's tones, however, are clearer and more distinct. The Lord is not only righteous but eternally so—"art, wast, and shalt be" righteous. As the sound of the first angel's voice is beginning to die away we are startled by the voice of another angel, like a second echo repeating behind us the notes of the first as it fades away, "Even so, Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments." The heavenly hosts seem to be filled with the contemplation of a holy God and His righteous judgments. The Church on high worships and adores God, and praises Him for His holiness and the justice of His judgments. How often we pray that God's Will may be done as in heaven so on earth? As we use these words do we mean what we say? If the Church on earth is to praise God as He is praised in heaven it is through her individual members she must do so. Do we, as members of the Church, strive to place ourselves in the Presence of God, humbly, reverently, thoughtfully, dwelling on His majesty? And do we suffer the echo to be borne back from us, weakly it may be, but clearly, "Thou art righteous, O Lord;" "true and righteous are Thy judgments?" Well for us if we confess our faith in God as a righteous Lord, and acknowledge that His judgments are true and upright. In so doing we join the Church triumphant in praising His holy Name.

Friday after the Fourth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

TILL I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all.—1 St. Timothy iv. 13—15.

ST. PAUL urges on Timothy the importance of meditation. He had spoken to him about the "mystery of godliness," the value of souls, the work of Christ for His Church; then he bids him "meditate upon these things," not weakly and weariedly, he was to "give himself wholly to them." Such meditation would be profitable, and his "profiting would appear to all." If we wish our meditation to be in earnest, if we wish to "give ourselves wholly" to it, we must, before we begin, place ourselves in the Presence of God and ask Him for His Spirit to inspire our hearts. We should not try to meditate on too many things at once. Rather let us think beforehand of some special subject to dwell on. As, for example, the end for which we were born into this world; or the attributes and gifts of God; or on sin, and death the consequence of sin; or the love and power of Christ to redeem us from the power and penalty of sin. We should choose some subject for meditation beforehand, the evening before, if possible; think of it as we rise in the morning, and then, alone with God, in devout thought, let us ponder over it, dispelling all other thoughts from the mind. If we cannot understand everything connected with the subject let us pray for enlightenment, but at the same time bow in lowly faith to God's Will. We should choose the first morning hours for meditation, both because the body being free from fatigue the spirit can give itself more wholly to it, and also, having thought over the matter early, we may often during the day recall our wandering thoughts and gain a still deeper insight into the things of God and profit thereby. The resolutions which we form during the meditation we should try to form into permanent habits of thought and action.

Saturday after the Fourth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

O JERUSALEM, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate: and verily I say unto you, Ye shall not see Me, until the time come when ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord.—St. Luke xiii. 34, 35.

IN these words of tenderest sympathy the Saviour teaches us a lesson of compassion for the fallen. Our Lord yearned over the people by whom He was "despised and rejected." It is the same now. He mourns over those who are blind to their best interests. He desires their eyes to be opened that they may see. He lived, He suffered, He died for them, He left them an Example, and now He intercedes on their behalf. He does even more than all this. He works for them still through His Church. The work of His servants is His work. Do we as members of His body help in winning souls to Christ? Have we zeal in this matter? And is our zeal a true zeal, unmingled with any unhallowed fire of our own spirit? Do we in our own sphere try to stem the torrent of unrighteousness and sin? When we see vice do we boldly rebuke it? To rebuke vice is regarded as a duty both by the Old and New Testaments. In Leviticus we read, "Thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him." It is remarkable that the words immediately preceding run thus, "Thou shalt not hate thy brother;" in other words, we must so love our neighbour as not to fail to rebuke him when he sins. Again, in the Epistle to the Ephesians we read, "Have no fellowship with the works of darkness, but rather reprove them." If we desire to win back the transgressors we must not only rebuke, we must plead with them, and make intercession to God on their behalf. Thus we shall be fellow-workers with, and followers of the Saviour, Who rebuked, pleaded with, and prayed for those who grieved Him; and wept for the hardened city that rejected and despised Him.

The Fifth Sunday after Trinity.

BE ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing. For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile: let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers.—1 St. Peter iii. 8—12.

ST. PETER teaches Christians how they ought to conduct themselves, first towards their brethren, and secondly towards them that are without; that is, those who resist and oppose the Gospel. Touching their intercourse with the brethren, they should be "all of one mind;" true concord and harmony should exist amongst them. They should "have compassion one of another;" there should be such a fellow-feeling as would cause each to feel the joy or sorrow of a brother as though it were his own. This fellow-feeling should deepen into a pure love for the brethren, making them so pitiful that they would grieve over their sufferings, bodily or spiritual, and would help them so far as it was in their power after the Example of the Good Shepherd Jesus Christ. If this be a true picture of what the Church should be, how much we have yet to learn! The apostle also teaches us many valuable lessons touching our intercourse with those who resist the truth. If they do us any wrong we must not render evil for their evil, or railing for railing: we must rather bless; because we, though at one time enemies to God, have been called to "inherit a blessing." If on any occasion we feel stirred within at some false calumnious word from the resister of the truth, let not the hasty reply pass our lips. Let us refrain our tongues, and speak not till we have calmed the passion of our souls. Let us do all in our power to secure peace. The blessing of the peacemaker will be ours if, having dwelt long amongst those that hate peace, we win them from their hatred, and woo them over to the side of friendship and brotherly love.

Monday after the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

BELOVED, thou doest faithfully whatsoever thou doest to the brethren, and to strangers; which have borne witness of thy charity before the church. Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.—3 St. John 5, 6, 11.

THE Apostle of Love teaches us that love alone leads to perfection. We must love God and love all that God loves if we wish to go on to perfection. It is not sufficient to hate all false ways, we must also love everything that is good. A mere negative Christianity is vain. We must positively love God's law. God's law says, "Follow not that which is evil, but that which is good." If we are God's children we must resemble Him and take delight in doing good. If we continue to do the evil we have no part or lot in Him. There are many difficulties in our way when we try to do good. Have we not also many helps? Let us consider for a moment some of the advantages on the side of goodness. Even in this world what can satisfy the soul save holiness and devotion? We may ask with the apostle, "What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed?" Ask the worldling if he receives real and lasting satisfaction from his vices and his sins. The end of these things is death. Death here to all that is ennobling and satisfying, death hereafter to all who wilfully persist in them to the end. Holiness, on the contrary, does give satisfaction. Here it makes us blessed, for it is a proof that we are "of God," united to the all-holy One by a firm bond of union that nothing can break. Hereafter we shall be blessed with a blessedness which those who continue in evil-doing cannot know, for "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Oh, that our hearts were so filled with love for God and His service that each day we might seek to minister unto Him by doing faithfully whatever we can do for "the brethren and for strangers;" that thus we too may become "fellow-helpers to the truth," and prove that we are of God, by loving and doing the good!

Tuesday after the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

FOR thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I, even I, will both search My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeketh out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered; so will I seek out My sheep. I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away, and will bind up that which was broken, and will strengthen that which was sick.—Ezekiel xxxiv. 11, 12, 16.

WHEN the Good Shepherd seeks His sheep and finds them, and brings them back to the fold, He does not then leave them to take care of themselves; He feeds them in a "fat pasture," and makes them to lie down "in a good fold;" He "binds up that which was broken, and strengthens that which was sick." In other words, in this world He does everything to help us and preserve us in the right way, and hereafter He receives us to favours and blessedness which the heart cannot conceive, which the intellect cannot grasp. Here, in this world, not a day, not an hour passes in which we do not receive from God fresh proofs of His love. Every hour God in His mercy helps, protects, preserves us, and enriches us with blessings. He makes the creatures of His hands minister to our wants. The sunlight, the air, the water, the fruits of the earth all minister to us, and assist in preserving life and health. But in addition to our bodily wants He supplies all our spiritual wants; He gives us grace to keep us from falling; when we have erred from the path He brings us back; when our souls are sick unto death He heals them and strengthens them. He provides the means of grace, and fills us through them with the hope of glory. He makes even His angels minister to us who are "heirs of salvation." Above all and beyond all He dwells in us by His Spirit, Who makes our hearts His dwelling-place, and our bodies temples of the Most High God. Oh, that the love of God might inflame our hearts and make us transfer our love from earthly and created things to Him alone! Oh, that the power of His love might draw us from external things, and raise our souls to Christ and things divine!

Wednesday after the Fifth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THEREFORE being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.—Romans v. 1—5.

TRUE peace is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The Saviour, before leaving His disciples, bestowed His peace upon them as one of His best gifts. The peace which He gave to His disciples He promises freely to all. We, then, may be possessed of this peace if we ask and seek aright. That which we must ask for is, to have our hearts so filled with love for God that there shall be no longer room for worldly desires or anxious gnawing cares. Worldly cares and passions will be ever seeking for admission; therefore we must continually watch and keep a guard over our hearts if we would continue in peace. When tribulations come we should not suffer them to be a cause of disquietude. Instead of allowing them to master us, we should compel them to become our slaves, that they may work in us patience. Thus we shall gain experience,—for inward peace is not the production of an hour or a day,—experience in prayer, experience in obedience, experience in bearing losses and injuries. What are earthly losses or injuries when we have the "love of God shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us?" The "love of God!" Oh, how great is that love! Can we refuse then to suffer, if it be the Will of God? If we wish for anything, let us desire it only in such a manner as not to feel any regret if it be not granted, that so our inward peace may not be disturbed. If we thus yield our wills to the Will of our Maker and Redeemer we shall have peace in our hearts, peace with God, and an earnest desire to live peaceably with all men.

Thursday after the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND He took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is My Body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of Me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in My Blood, which is shed for you.—St. Luke xxii. 19, 20.

AS we read these words we should lift up our hearts in prayer to our heavenly Father to grant us grace and faith to receive, without any touch of doubt, that which His Son Jesus Christ has here communicated to us. We should pray that our hearts may be filled with a sense of His love, even though our minds cannot altogether understand the full meaning of His words. It is indeed not necessary that our intellects should be able to understand these divine words in all their depth of meaning. It is not necessary for us to know by what means the bread and wine become for us, as they did for the disciples, the communion, the partaking of Christ's Body and Blood. It is sufficient for us to believe the Saviour, and allow Him to accomplish His words in His own way. Christ's words can mean nothing else than this, that if the consecrated bread and wine be received worthily and rightly, they become in us and for us the Body and Blood of Christ, and our souls receive as real nourishment from thus partaking of the Body and Blood of Christ as our bodies do from partaking of bread and wine. We shall save ourselves from falling into many errors if we accept the words of Christ in simplicity, and do not attempt to explain minutely the meaning of a mystery which the Holy Spirit has not seen fit further to reveal. Oh, the love of God, to provide such food for our souls! Would that every member of His Church would constantly and regularly make use of this divine food, "worthily, rightly, and with faith!" For then we feed on the Body and Blood of Christ, and are united to Him and to one another in the holiest of bonds, even in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, which is the highest spiritual exercise we can engage in, the very centre and core of our Christian religion, the heart and soul of all devotion.

Friday after the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots. And the people stood beholding. And the rulers also with them derided Him, saying, He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He be Christ, the chosen of God. And the soldiers also mocked Him, coming to Him, and offering Him vinegar, and saying, If Thou be the king of the Jews, save Thyself.—St. Luke xxiii. 33—37.

IF we would understand somewhat of the sufferings of Christ we should place ourselves in spirit by His side on the night of His Passion and the day on which He was crucified. See how He was "despised and rejected," not only by enemies but by His own chosen ones. Betrayed by one, denied by another, deserted by all. Consider what He endured at the hands of His own people; what He suffered in the midst of the brutal Roman soldiery. Truly He was a "man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Let us remember it was for our sakes He suffered. "He hath borne *our* griefs, He carried *our* sorrows, He was wounded for *our* transgressions, bruised for *our* iniquities." Do we thoroughly realise this? We have all gone astray, we have all transgressed; for our transgressions He was wounded. What should be the effect of such thoughts? Does His infinite love for us kindle the fire of love in our hearts? Do we love and honour Him as we think of what He was content to endure for us? Do we make any effort to prove our love by making some return to God for all His goodness and love? Are we interested in making known His love? In our own sphere, and in the position where God has placed us, do we try to lead others to do God's Will, and so to honour Him Who suffered and died for them? Do we truly repent of our iniquities for which He was bruised; and are we filled with, and do we give expression to, a devout thankfulness for all our Saviour has done and suffered?

Saturday after the Fifth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

JOSEPH of Arimathæa, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the Body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night. Then took they the Body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new sepulchre, wherein was never man yet laid. There laid they Jesus.—St. John xix. 38—42.

AGAIN we have a literal fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah. The rich assisted at the burial of Jesus. St. Matthew tells us that Joseph was a rich man, and doubtless Nicodemus was so likewise, as he was a "ruler of the Jews," and probably president of the Sanhedrin. When reading the story of the burial of the Saviour's Body we should try to realise what these two loving disciples felt as they piously laid Jesus in the "new sepulchre wherein was never man yet laid." The faith of these disciples is remarkable. During the life of our Lord they remained "secret disciples," "for fear of the Jews." But when Christ hung on the Cross, when He had yielded up His Spirit into His Father's hands, then they threw off all disguise, and openly went and "begged the body of Jesus." The Redeemer saw thus early "of the travail of His soul." Here were two who had been part of Satan's spoil torn from his grasp and delivered from his bondage. Does the Saviour see "of the travail of His soul" in us? Is He "satisfied" with us? Has His Passion produced its fruits in us? If called to do so, are we ready to acknowledge by word and deed our Master? Are we ready, if necessary, to participate in His sufferings? Are we ready and willing to serve Him in the members of His Church? Do we gently and lovingly perform little acts of kindness to those around us? Have we buried in the grave of Christ all our evil passions, everything in our hearts and lives that would cause Him suffering? and do we wait in faith and patience for our joyful resurrection?

The Sixth Sunday after Trinity.

KNOW ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death; that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection.—Romans vi. 3—5.

ST. PAUL frequently reminds his converts that in Baptism they were buried with Christ. For example, in the Epistle to the Colossians he says, "Buried with Him in Baptism, wherein also ye are risen with Him;" risen, that is, to "newness of life," after the likeness of His resurrection, Who "was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father." As the Saviour was crucified for the sin of the whole world, so must our "old man," that is, our natural evil disposition, our self-will and self-love, "be crucified with Him, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Then the hidden life of Christ springs up within us and makes us "alive unto God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." This is the meaning of our Baptism; we, through our sponsors, promised to die unto sin for ever, and to live for God. Nor can anyone excuse himself by saying he was too young to understand what was then promised for him. In our Confirmation we, with our own mouths, ratified and confirmed the threefold vow of our Baptism. If, again, anyone may argue that he was confirmed because it was the custom of the country, or to please those who were guardians over him, still he has no excuse; for the fact that he desires to be considered a member of the Church, and shows openly that desire by attending the means of grace, is sufficient to bind him to the promises made for him when being made a "member of Christ." All who are baptized, then, should resolve to give themselves early to the Lord; never deliberately to give way to any sin, nor yield to the temptations of the world. Let us seek the divine guidance, and learn to believe in and serve faithfully our God, that we may have the full life of the Spirit dwelling within us, through Christ Jesus.

Monday after the Sixth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

HAVE no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light. See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is.—Ephesians v. 11—17.

IF Christ be dwelling in us and we in Christ, we ought to bring forth fruit meet for such an in-dwelling. The fruit of the in-dwelling of Christ in us is light. This light enlightens our understandings to comprehend hidden mysteries. We learn how awful spiritual darkness is, and receive strength to avoid fellowship with its unfruitful works. Here then is a test by which we may know whether Christ is indeed "dwelling in us and we in Him." Do we find after each communion that the world has less hold on us, that the unfruitful works of darkness are tasteless and wearisome to us? Do we feel fresh courage to walk "circumspectly," to conquer self, to fight against our own will? Do we feel that we make some advance in the spiritual life? Is self-denial less irksome to us, prayer more earnest and real, and divine help more frequently sought? If such be the results of our communions we have good reason for believing that they have been blessed to us; that we have arisen from our spiritual slumber, and that Christ, in us, is light and life; that we are living in Him, even as He lives by the Father. Thus living in Him, we shall have all things in and through Him. His Spirit will work in us, making us active in "redeeming the time." We shall trust ourselves to His guidance; we shall trust to ourselves for nothing. We shall not search too curiously into hidden mysteries, but accept His teaching in all the simplicity of its meaning. He will make us wise to "understand what the Will of the Lord is."

TUESDAY AFTER THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.
EVENING.

BE patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.—St. James v. 7, 8, 11.

"THE Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord." It was at the moment when Job's earthly anguish seemed to have reached its climax that he gave utterance to these words, which show that the ruling power of his life was absolute submission to the Will of God. On one and the same day he was deprived of his wealth, his servants, and his children. All these afflictions came suddenly, unexpectedly. In the morning he arose with a sense of thankfulness for all his possessions, and a sense of pleasure in the scene of peaceful loveliness which surrounded him; in the evening the whole is a desert, his domestic circle a heap of ruins. But even here his calamities did not end. Satan is permitted to go forth and smite "Job with sore boils, from the sole of his foot unto his crown." "In all this did not Job sin with his lips." "What?" he says, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" Such was the patience of Job. He had learned the lesson of contentment—

"Rather in all to be resign'd than blest."

Have we learned this lesson? Have we learned to conquer self, to fight against our own will, to bear whatever God may lay upon us? Are we willing to accept His corrections as well as His favours; and to seek and love Him for Himself alone, and not for what He gives? Let us be patient; patient as "the husbandman who waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth;" patient as the prophets of old, who are set before us as "an example of suffering affliction and of patience."

Wednesday after the Sixth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed Him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon us. And Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto Him, Yea, Lord. Then touched He their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. As they went out, behold, they brought to Him a dumb man possessed with a devil. And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled.—St. Matthew ix. 27—29, 32, 33.

AS we read the story of the two blind men and of the dumb man possessed with a devil, we cannot help being reminded of the words of St. Paul, "All things work together for good to them that love God." All things, whether sickness or health, pleasure or pain, joy or sorrow. Doubtless these sufferers grieved over their blindness and want of speech; they thought the discipline to which they were subjected hard and severe. They could not see why they were thus deprived of sight and speech, while others were in possession of all their senses. The sequel shows us that all was working for their good. God had so ordered their lot that their very privations should be the means of gaining them the greatest blessings. The darkness of the blind men led them to the "Light of the world." Not only did they see with their bodily eyes, but their minds were enlightened, their faith increased, and they believed in and confessed Jesus as their Lord. He who was possessed with the devil was brought by his infirmity to Him Who was stronger than "the strong man armed;" and from being the slave of Satan he became the servant of God, entering upon a service which is "perfect freedom." Do we ever feel bitter rebellious feelings stealing over us, because the light and sunshine of our life seems gone, and nothing left but suffering? Let us at such moments think of St. Paul's words, "All things," even our sufferings, "work together for good," if we love God. Do we love Him? Then our very trials must give us a sense of union and fellowship with Christ, Who was a Man of sorrows, Who suffered and died for us. Our sufferings willingly borne for His sake will draw us nearer to Him.

BEWARE of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for My Name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.—St. Matthew x. 17, 21, 22.

"WE must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God;" yea, "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." These are words of warning which the Apostle Paul addressed to his converts. True, they had more depth of meaning for them than for us. Surrounded as they were by the heathen, their very lives were in danger when they confessed their faith in Christ. They gave up home and friends and kindred, and were regarded as the "offscouring of the world." How great their faith, to be able in the face of such persecution to give up all for Christ! Our Lord in similar language warns His disciples of the sufferings in store for them. He bids them prepare themselves, but at the same time to trust in the wisdom which should be given them from above; for the Spirit of their Father would speak in them. He stimulates them to exertion by reminding them of their reward: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved." It is not probable that we shall be called on to endure sufferings like the early Christians, but it is all but certain that we shall be called on to suffer some pain and loss. Let us prepare for the hour of suffering by giving ourselves up wholly to God and seeking His glory in all we do; giving all that we have and are to Him; desiring to "lose our life for His sake," that we may find our eternal life in Him when we have endured unto the end. If we give ourselves to God, whatever comes will be for our gain. We may not see it at the time, sight often hinders faith in such matters; but we shall "learn the mystery right" when we shall have ascended up in and with our Saviour, and rest

"In the full sunshine of His smile."

Friday after the Sixth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

HE that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it.—St. Matthew x. 37—39.

CHRIST bids His disciples to follow Him. He does not compel, nor bring force to bear upon our wills. He leaves it to our own free choice. He tells us, however, that if we refuse to follow Him we are "not worthy of Him." To "follow Christ in the way" is the beginning of Christian perfection. We must follow Him by "taking up our cross." The Cross of Christ is the centre and core of His Gospel. He saved us by His Cross; He preserves us by His Cross. This does not exempt us from taking up and bearing our cross. This we must do if we would follow our divine Master. By "our cross" we must understand devoting ourselves unreservedly to God's Will, and bearing not only patiently but willingly, yea, joyfully, whatever His wisdom lays upon us. We must understand also active co-operation with God in going on to perfection. We must renounce every evil way, and avoid all occasions of sin. We must wean our hearts from earthly things. We must suffer our souls to be emptied of everything that would weigh them down, and filled with thoughts which may help them to wing their flight upwards. We must also "humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God." If we would share Christ's Cross we must be willing to share His humiliations. Oh, how blessed it is for us that Jesus goes on before us! He encourages us by His words and by His example. "Be worthy of Me," He says: worthy of your Leader. Consider what a soldier owes to his general who leads on to victory, what the disciple owes his master, what a son owes to a loving father. How much more do we owe our Lord! We owe Him love, obedience, gratitude. We owe Him our bodies, souls, and spirits; for He has created them, He has redeemed them, He purchased them with His own Blood on the Cross.

Saturday after the Sixth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

WHEN John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, and said unto Him, Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another? Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in Me.—St. Matthew xi. 2—6.

THOUGH the holiest men in every age have been assailed with doubts, and sorely tried, yet there is no necessity for thinking that any doubts had found their place in the mind of John Baptist when he sent his disciples to ask, "Art Thou He that should come?" St. John had received abundant testimony to convince him of the truth of Christ's mission. He was content "patiently to suffer for the truth's sake;" but he was anxious to bring conviction to the minds of his disciples, to satisfy any doubts which might have arisen in them. This was one of the many ways in which he was "preparing the way of the Lord." Convincing his disciples of the truth, he prepared the way for them to go over to the Lord, and become His disciples when the messenger's work was finished and he had passed away. See how our Lord bears His testimony to one of the most eminent of the saints and servants of God. He was "a prophet," yea, "more than a prophet;" he was the herald, the messenger, the forerunner, the link between the old and the new, the clear witness to Christ. "Notwithstanding, he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." That is, the least member of Christ's Church is greater than St. John Baptist. We have greater privileges and more light. We have been baptised into that Kingdom which was then only being established. We have the gift of the Spirit. We rejoice in the bright light which shines from the Cross, and Grave, and Resurrection of Christ. Great indeed are our privileges! Let us never forget that our responsibilities are correspondingly great.

The Seventh Sunday after Trinity.

I SPEAK after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.—Romans vi. 19—22.

OUR Lord Himself tells us we "cannot serve two masters." St. Paul in the Epistle to-day tells us that two masters utterly opposed to each other lay claim to our service. Sin, though not our rightful master, has a great attraction for us. It has been said that there is a "sad necessity to sin" in the natural man, who has inherited the taint of sin from his first parents. Man is capable of becoming the complete slave of sin. There is no sin of which he is not capable. When we commit sin, we become the servants of sin; and while we are thus the servants of sin, we are free from righteousness. Another Master claims us. He has a right to do so, as He is our Creator. When we lost His express image in which we were created He purchased us back, having provided a ransom. Thus there is no longer the "sad necessity to sin" in anyone in whom God's grace is working. We are made free from sin. There is no necessity to obey it in the lusts thereof. God, through grace, draws us nearer to Himself than when we were first created. He gives us supernatural gifts. We become His servants. No longer need we be ashamed of the fruits we bear. Being God's servants our "fruit is unto holiness." We become united to God here in closest bonds; hereafter we shall share His bliss. All who wilfully refuse to obey, and remain slaves of sin and enemies of His holiness, earn their own destruction; they receive their "wages," even death. But to all His faithful servants God will grant the "gift of eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Monday after the Seventh Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

JESUS went on the sabbath day through the corn; and His disciples began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. When the Pharisees saw it, they said unto Him, Behold, Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day. He said unto them, Have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless? But I say unto you, That in this place is One greater than the temple. But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.—St. Matthew xii. 1—3, 5—7.

IF we would derive all the benefit which the instruction of Christ is fitted and intended to give, we should place ourselves in spirit in His Presence as He taught the listening multitudes. This evening, we hear Him rebuking those who judge others harshly and uncharitably. If we understood the meaning of such words as those of Hosea, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice," we should not be so ready to condemn the guiltless. Besides, who are we, that we should condemn our neighbour? We have not been constituted his judge. The Father has put all judgment into the Son's hands. If we judge, we usurp the Son's office. But, in addition to this, have we any special qualifications for judging? Are we ourselves innocent? Alas, if we look within we shall find many a fault, many a sad moral defect. We look with the eye of mercy on our own sins. We know how to excuse ourselves, if we cannot help seeing that we have done wrong. If we can throw any doubt on the wrong we do so willingly, and then try to shut our eyes to the matter for the future. How different our judgment of the sins of our neighbour! There we have little mercy; the least appearance of guilt is enough to make us condemn, and thus often we "condemn the guiltless." "Judge not." In doing so we call down judgment on ourselves; for with what judgment we judge we shall be judged, and we encourage within us an uncharitable, unforgiving spirit. If we will judge, let us judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord.

Tuesday after the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

JESUS knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation: and if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges. But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.—St. Matthew xii. 25—28.

IT is well that we should be reminded from time to time that the battle we have to fight is against a person, a great spirit of evil, an enemy of God and man. We have to contend not merely against the tendency of an evil nature within us, nor only against the world with its evil men and evil influences; but against a being who is as a "strong man armed." Our Saviour tells us plainly, that a living person, an adversary, has to be met and conquered. The Bible does not hide from us that this enemy is strong, and that his one end and aim is to destroy. He is wise; he has gained much experience during the thousands of years he has struggled with human souls. He has gathered up a great store of satanic learning from the various stratagems he has planned to get souls into his power and grasp. He adapts his temptations to the nature and character of each individual whom he desires to destroy. But, thanks be to God, the devil's power is limited. He has not the omniscience of God, nor is he omnipotent. To the faithful Christian, holding before him the protection which Christ gives, and using the weapon which the Holy Spirit provides, he must yield. If we resist he will flee. If we yield we shall become part of "his goods." Let us not think, however, that we can meet Satan and conquer him in our own strength. We must be clothed with the armour of God, and grasp the sword of the Spirit, which is God's Holy Word. Then let us look up to the Captain of our Salvation, and ask Him to lead us on to victory for the glory of His great Name.

Wednesday after the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AGAIN, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seekly goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.—St. Matthew xiii. 44—46.

THE "Kingdom of Heaven" is the Church, which from a very small beginning has continued growing and increasing until it is now become a great overshadowing tree in whose branches the birds of the air lodge. Its privileges are manifold; but to benefit by them we must, each for himself, appropriate the blessings and graces which through it are bestowed on seeking and prepared souls. The parables of the "Hidden Treasure" and the "Pearl of Great Price," set forth the priceless value of these blessings. They were spoken to the disciples, not to the multitude without. The disciples had made their choice. They had sacrificed all their worldly goods "for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ." The Saviour encourages them by showing that the value of the prize is worth the sacrifice they had made. The encouragement is for us, and for all who will listen to the words of their Redeemer. It is not sufficient to be a member of the Church of Christ; we must faithfully use our privileges. Each individual member must become a partaker in the rich blessings of the Gospel, otherwise he will remain barren and unfruitful. These blessings come to us through the rich provision of means which God has provided in His Church. It was through the "two golden pipes" that Zechariah saw the "golden oil" emptied out for the use of the worshippers in the Temple. If we desire the "golden oil" of the Gospel, we must receive it in God's appointed way through the "golden pipes," that is, through the means of grace ordained by Christ Himself. Let us bless His holy Name for these means, and earnestly seek to derive from them all the benefits they are meant to convey, that our souls may be filled through them with the "hope of glory."

Thursday after the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

WHEN He was come into His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? And they were offended in Him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.—St. Matthew xiii. 54, 55, 57.

WHEN our Lord "came into His own country" His "kinsmen stood afar off." They scorned One Whom they knew so well, Whose personal appearance was so familiar to them. They were offended that the carpenter's son, Who also Himself had worked at the trade, should set Himself up as their teacher. Our Lord quotes a proverb which teaches a valuable truth. We are inclined to think lightly of blessings because they are at our very doors. How few of us think as we ought to do of God's goodness in bringing back the daylight each morning, and in regulating the seasons of the year! These are familiar mercies, therefore easily forgotten. If we saw in these the hand of God, we should have a firmer faith. These "kinsmen" of Jesus saw Him constantly amongst them. He appeared to them like others of their "acquaintances and kinsfolk." They could not believe Him a Prophet; therefore their want of faith. The result of their unbelief was that Jesus "could not do many mighty works there." Let us learn from this the importance of faith. It is the first step towards holy things. Jesus "can do no mighty work" for us, if we persist in unbelief. Oh, how we should pray that God may give us an earnest and true faith, and increase it ever more and more, that Christ may do His mighty works in and for us, and that holy works, the fruits of faith, may be produced by us! Of what infinite importance is faith! It opens our blind eyes to behold in Nature around us many miracles of God's working, and in our souls the miracles of grace. Let us exercise our faith, lest it lose strength. Exercise it by believing Him Who never deceives and is never deceived, and Who rewards His faithful with eternal life.

Friday after the Seventh Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND straightway Jesus constrained His disciples to get into a ship, and to go before Him unto the other side, while He sent the multitudes away. And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, He was there alone. But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves; for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them.—St. Matthew xiv. 22—25.

IN the little ship "tossed with the waves" we have a fit emblem of the life of man. Many are the storms and tempests we meet. Sometimes we are sent to meet these troubles by Christ Himself, just as here He "constrained His disciples to get into the ship." He sent them forth knowing that they would meet the storm, and be for a time in danger. But all through the danger and trouble He is watching. Though unseen, He sees us. He is looking down upon us with earnest loving gaze, and when the time comes He will help and deliver us from the peril. It is a solemn, but at the same time a comforting thought, that our God and Saviour is very near, and sees all that we do, knows all that we think. This thought should stimulate us to action, it should help to bridle our passions, it should assist us in prayer. If we would follow the example of our Master, we must be men of prayer and men of action. How beautifully the two are blended together throughout the whole life of our Lord! So it is also in the life of the angelic beings. At one time they are rapt in silent adoration; at another they sing aloud the praises of God; at another they speed forth on the errands upon which their Creator sends them. Christ will be with us in our prayers, in our adoration, and in our active life. He promises to be always with His waiting, struggling Church. The promise extends to every individual in that Church. He does not promise that we shall not be tossed with fierce tempests; but He does promise that in the tempest He will be with us. Let us have faith in Him, and trust His promise, and offer continually psalms of thanksgiving for the manifold blessings of His abiding Presence.

Saturday after the Seventh Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THEN came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, saying, Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. But He answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto Me with their mouth, and honoureth Me with their lips; but their heart is far from Me.—St. Matthew xv. 1—3, 7, 8.

WE have here a very plain illustration in what "Pharisaical righteousness" consisted. These Pharisees are indignant, because Jesus' disciples transgressed the tradition about washing hands before eating bread; yet they themselves broke the commandments of God and encouraged others to break them by teaching that it was unnecessary to help a poor and aged parent, if that by which the parent "might be profited" was dedicated to God. God said, "Honour thy father and thy mother." To "honour" includes, as our Catechism rightly explains, "loving and succouring." And yet these Pharisees said, that a man became at once free from the duty of succouring or helping his parents if he set apart as a gift to God that with which he might have helped them. Thus Pharisaical righteousness consists in "drawing nigh to God with the mouth, while the heart is far from Him." It is an outside righteousness to be seen of men, while within the heart is utterly godless. We should beware of desiring the praise of men. He who loves much the praise of men loves the praise of God very little. Oh, that we had more of a true love to God in our hearts! It would drive out every impure thought. It would make us take a delight in His commandments. Obedience is the fruit of love, as well as the road to love. If we obeyed God from the heart, we should not care so much for man's traditions. We should indeed draw nigh to God with our mouths and honour Him with our lips, but our hearts should be there also. What we speak with our lips should well up from our hearts, if we wish it to be acceptable to God, and win a blessing from Him.

The Eighth Sunday after Trinity.

BRETHREN, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.—Romans viii. 12—15.

"THEREFORE, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh." And why? Because "the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in us." We who have been born again of water and of the Spirit are no longer debtors to the flesh; we have been freed from sin. If we fall back into sin and become its slaves we commit self-murder, for "if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." Oh, that the tempted would for one moment think of the fearful consequences of sin! It is because a man neglects to think and consider, that he so readily yields to temptation. He is like "a bird hastening to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life." The tendency to sin remains in us; even when "baptized and born again in Christ" we "offend in many things;" but we are not the slaves of sin. We have a power within us by which we may conquer and slay sin. The more we use this power, the more it will increase. The more it increases, the more do we prove ourselves the sons of God. The more confident we are in our relationship, the more joyfully do we look upward, and cry, "Our Father." If ever our faith becomes weak, "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God." God has given us all the powers and rights of children; we are His "heirs, and joint-heirs with Christ." Are we "walking worthy of our vocation?" Do we daily use the powers and exert the rights which God has given us? Are the fruits of the Spirit manifested in our words and works, our character and lives? Let us earnestly pray the Holy Ghost to perfect in our souls the work He comes to do.

Monday after the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

BY the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.—Romans iii. 20—24.

ST. PAUL states very clearly and answers fully the question which so exercised the mind of Job and his friends, "How can man be justified with God?" "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." Thanks be to God, He has provided another way. We have "all sinned, and come short of the glory of God." True; but all may be "justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." So that now, God can abide "just," and still be the "justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." To be "clean" and "justified with God" on the ground of personal merit is indeed impossible. We must not rely on our own frail strength or good intentions. Our first step must be to lay aside all vain self-confidence, and to put our confidence in God. All men can, and, if they wish to be "clean," must do this. Then what is the ground of our faith and hope? "The redemption that is in Christ Jesus." If we yield ourselves with an absolute submission to God, He will for Christ's sake "justify," and in doing so can still be just. This should teach us to be humble, to give God all the glory, to be conscious of our weakness, to possess a lowly spirit of faith and trust in God's strength. When we attain to this, our God will, through His Spirit, lead us on step by step in the paths of sanctification. Oh, that we could accept the truths of the Gospel in all their simplicity and beauty! Oh, that we could cast aside all vain confidence in self, and trust to God's strength and guidance! We should then steadily attain to the higher paths in the divine life.

Tuesday after the Eighth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THEN Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. Which when Jesus perceived, He said unto them, O ye of little faith, how is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?—St. Matthew xvi. 6—8, 11.

SCRIPTURE constantly explains itself. If we are in doubt as to the meaning of some passage, let us consult some other passages which treat of the same or similar subjects, and we shall find light thrown on the difficulty. Our Lord explains elsewhere what He means by "the leaven of the Pharisees," against which He warns His disciples. In denouncing them and the scribes, He says, Ye are "like whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones; even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy." Thus it was against an outward appearance of religion that Christ warned His disciples. He valued a religion which sprang from the heart: a religion whose root was faith in Him; a root unseen but alive: a religion which is the result of secret devotion and inward love to God: a religion whose outward works spring from a desire to please God. A religion such as this cannot suffer any secret sins, or sins arising from spiritual pride, to exist. It will strive after a high degree of holiness, from one motive only, "because God is holy." It will be ever found in the pursuit of perfection, because "our Father which is in heaven is perfect." Do we desire to possess a religion such as this? Let us not fail each day to commend our actions to God; to ask Him to accept our work, whatever it may be; to do that work honestly as in His sight, and to dedicate it to Him at its close. Nothing is too small to offer to God, if offered willingly and from right motives. Let us not forget to thank Him for whatever measure of success He permits us to attain unto.

Wednesday after the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with Him.—St. Matthew xvii. 1—3.

ONCE again the Saviour chooses these three favoured apostles to behold that which was hidden from the other disciples. They had already witnessed His power over death, they should now see His glory. Afterwards they were to be chosen witnesses of His agony. It was doubtless to strengthen His disciples that He showed them a glimpse of His glory. They would soon have to pass through awful scenes. They should see their Master crucified between two thieves. Would not their faith be strengthened when they remembered how they saw Him stand between two Saints—representatives of the law and the prophets? They should hear their Redeemer cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Would it not strengthen their faith to remember that the Father had borne testimony to His Son in the words which they heard "coming from the excellent glory," "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased?" They should behold Him taken down from the Cross, a lifeless corpse; but even then they could look back and prevent their faith from being altogether extinguished by the memory of His glory on the Mount. It was up into a "high mountain" our Lord took these three disciples, thereby teaching us that we must rise above the petty things of this world, if we would catch a glimpse of the glories of that other world. He took them "apart," away from the busy hum of the eager crowd, to teach us that in solitude the soul draws nearer to God. In lonely communion we hear the still small voice of God speaking to our souls. It is often overpowered or silenced by the noisy companionship of the world. Do we wish to have our souls refreshed? Do we earnestly long to have our faith strengthened? Let us seek our Lord in prayer, seek Him in the solitude of our own hearts; we shall not be disappointed; the voice of God will speak peace to our souls.

Thursday after the Eighth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: and they shall kill Him, and the third day He shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your Master pay tribute? He saith, Yes.—St Matthew xvii. 22—25.

ONCE again the Saviour foretells His Passion. The disciples cannot, they will not understand. It all seemed so terrible. They can do nothing but grieve at the thought when it is forcibly brought to their minds. They then try and forget it as soon as they can. Still, these oft-repeated warnings were not completely lost on His apostles. They would not understand; yet unconsciously they were being prepared by them, and afterwards our Lord could refer to them as a proof that nothing had happened which He had not foretold. We rebuke the disciples for the dulness of their understandings; but is it not possible that a similar rebuke may be justly earned by ourselves? We have our Lord's words and works explaining the meaning of His prophecy; we have light streaming down upon us from the Cross, and yet are we not slow to believe the truths which have been revealed? If we yield an assent to the truths and doctrines, are we not slow to appropriate to ourselves the blessings? And if we do accept the doctrines, and even make use of the Church's means of grace, still, are we not slow in the progress we make? Not by His words only does our Lord here teach us, but also by His Example. Though He is the Son of God, the King of kings, and therefore, as a Son, free from taxation; nevertheless, He will pay the half-shekel required to be paid annually by all Jews of twenty years old and upward for the temple services in Jerusalem, lest He should put a stumbling-block in another's way. Thus He teaches us by His example the duty of contributing to maintain the services of the Church, and to beware lest by any action of ours we cause our brother to offend.

Friday after the Eighth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

WHOSO shall receive one such little child in My Name receiveth Me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!—St. Matthew xviii. 5—7.

ST. PAUL in writing to the Corinthians bids them, in very earnest tones, beware of causing a weak brother to offend. He does but echo the Master's words when He warns us against offending one of His "little ones." To "offend" in the Bible never means to hurt the feelings, but to cause to stumble, to cast a stumbling-block before a weak brother. They who have little faith, whose faith is weak, are most easily "offended;" they are most liable to stumble. One way we can cause our brother to offend is by showing a bad example. It is to this our Lord here alludes. The disciples were displaying an ambitious spirit; they were desiring great things for themselves in the Kingdom which they thought that Jesus was about to found on earth with Jerusalem as its capital. He gently points out their error, and tells them that the necessary qualifications for entrance into His Kingdom are gentleness, purity, love, humility. Bad examples there "must needs be" in every religious community. The Church, even to the judgment day, will be composed of good and bad. But we should strive to increase the number of good, and diminish the number of bad. We can do so by showing a good example. What kind of example are we to our neighbours? Do we always avoid giving offence either by word or deed? Do we try to avoid paining or injuring others? Are we kind and courteous towards all men? Are we truthful in our words, and guileless in our thoughts? Have we been preserved from a complaining spirit? By asking ourselves these and similar questions we can ascertain for ourselves whether we are helping others by our good example, or whether we are a cause of stumbling, bringing "woe into the world" and to ourselves.

I AM not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse.—Romans i. 16—18, 20.

"TOUCHING the Almighty, we cannot find Him out;" so says Elihu in the Book of Job, and with truth. God, in all His infinite perfections, is incomprehensible. But He permits man to learn something of Him. Through "the things that are made," all men can understand "His power and Godhead." "They are without excuse." The "heavens declare His glory." It is because man is vain, and his heart darkened, that he does not glorify God! What a rebuke is here uttered against those who will not meditate on the wondrous works of God! Oh, that men would turn their eyes to the stars above, to the beauty of the earth, to the countless worlds in the firmament over their heads, and the variety of life in the dust beneath their feet! If they did so with hearts prepared to receive their teaching, they could not but see in them the power and wisdom of God. But we Christians can know more of God than His works tell. We have His revealed Word. We have the teaching of His Spirit. We know what God has done and is doing for our salvation. We are "not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," for "therein is the righteousness of God revealed." We know how God helps us by His grace; how He calls us away from evil to good; how He guards us from sin; and how, when we sin, He brings us to repentance, and fills us with a hatred of sin. We know how He sent His Son to die that we might live; to be buried that we might be buried with Him; and that through the "grave and gate of death we might pass to our joyful resurrection."

The Ninth Sunday after Trinity.

NEITHER let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come.—1 Corinthians x. 9—11.

IT appears strange, yea, unaccountable, that the children of Israel should so often have rebelled against God, notwithstanding the many ways in which He revealed His will and power to them. They saw His wonders in Egypt; they were saved from the hands of the tyrant at the Red Sea; they witnessed the majestic revelation of God's glory on Mount Sinai: and yet, a few days after, they danced around a golden calf. Shortly afterwards they suffer themselves to be tempted "to commit fornication," and are punished by the hand of God; "three and twenty thousand falling in the one day." Scarcely a day elapses before they have forgotten the wrath of the Lord, and its fearful results, and they "tempt Christ," and were "destroyed of serpents." Again the Almighty interposes with a miracle, and provides means to save those who have faith. But no sooner are they healed by the miraculous interference of God than they murmur, and are again "destroyed by the destroyer." How quickly did the good impressions vanish! How rapidly was the spiritual life dried up in the wilderness, which had begun in Egypt so rich in joyful experience! These falls and backslidings were recorded for our admonition. They should teach us to distrust ourselves, and to trust God. This is the wisdom of the Christian. "God will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear." He will "with the temptation make a way to escape:" that is, if we ask Him, if we trust Him. If we go to meet the temptation in our own strength, we shall fall as the Israelites did. If we trust in God, and pray to Him, He will give us strength to resist. Each day we must ask Him, and each day He will give us strength sufficient for the day. "As our day is, so shall our strength be."

Monday after the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

IT is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When His disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.—St. Matthew xix. 24—26.

THE apostles were "amazed" at the saying of the Lord that "a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." He had told them before that the entrance was narrow, the way strait; but they did not realise how narrow and strait till He brought it home to them by this seemingly hard saying. Doubtless they thought, How is this? Are not riches a gift from God? Has He not made the silver and gold? Did He not, when He created the living creatures, give all as a possession to man? How is it then that wealth is now regarded as an enemy, a hindrance to our becoming members of the Kingdom? Experience provides us with the answer. Riches have a tendency to make men proud, hard, and self-reliant. He who has vast possessions is inclined to say, "Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry." He wants not God, nor man; he is sufficient in himself. He creates for himself a paradise here, and wants not to think on the future or make provision for the needs of his soul. What then should we do if we have great possessions? First, let us not "trust in riches." If we do, we may be sure they will become a hindrance, they will make us proud towards our brethren and rebellious against God. Again, let us remember that we are not the owners of the wealth; we are but stewards. If we wish to be found faithful, we should use our possessions as the real Owner desires. Let us now use them in the manner in which we should wish we had done when called on to give an account of our stewardship. If we thus, in true trust in God, use the possessions which He has confided for a little time to our care, instead of being a "hindrance" they will be a help in the way which leadeth to life.

Tuesday after the Ninth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted Him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.—St. Luke x. 25—28.

IT was the voice of God made Job confess he was vile. The voice of the Almighty struck conviction into his soul, and worked in him repentance. How did God convince him of His existence and power? By appealing to Nature, and pointing out the order that prevailed; by bidding him examine himself, and see the variety of his powers, and to look within, and let his inner consciousness convince him. Have we a firm belief in the being, the power, the love of God? If so, we "are not far from the Kingdom of God." But this is not sufficient. What effect has our belief on our lives? The most awful of all truths is that there is a Creator infinite in power, and that He rules and preserves all things visible and invisible. But the devils believe this tremendous truth, and remain devils. They tremble indeed, but it has no sanctifying effect upon them. If we say we believe in God, but belie our faith by our actions, of what value is it to us? Do we desire our faith to be a living faith? Do we desire to believe in God as our Father, even in the midst of suffering affliction, and to be able to cry out in the words of Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him?" Do we desire this kind of faith? Then let us consider what God has done for us personally; let us dwell on our relationship to Him; think what we owe Him. Seeing there is a God Who loves us, let us ask ourselves, What should we do for Him? What should we leave undone? What He requires is, that we love Him with our whole heart and soul and understanding; and interest ourselves in the welfare of our neighbour, for His sake.

Wednesday after the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you? They say unto Him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed Him.—St. Matthew xx. 30, 32—34.

BY graciously healing these blind men, our Lord illustrates what He meant by the words He had just spoken to His disciples: "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister." His love was not a mere sympathising love, but an active, helping, healing love. With the divine powers He had at command He ministered to men. Going about in the midst of the sorrow and misery of earth, He was constantly doing good,—making the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the lame to walk. He was ever ready to help and to minister. It mattered not to Him that the crowds of petitioners left Him no time for needful rest and refreshment. Never do we see the slightest exhibition of impatience. Never do we hear of any one being sent away uncomforted. How near it brings Him to us when we read that He suffered like as we do! He was weary when He sat at Jacob's well; but He refuses not to minister comfort and consolation to the woman who came to draw water. He grieves over sorrow, shedding tears at Lazarus' grave; but He ministers consolation to the saddened hearts around Him. He grieves over sin, weeping over Jerusalem since she knew not the time of her visitation; but still shows His willingness to minister, by giving His life for those who rejected Him. Jesus Christ is the same now that He was then. He is just as willing to open the eyes of the spiritually blind. Would that all spiritually blind knew their blindness, and would come with the simple request, "Lord, we desire that our eyes may be opened!" He would have compassion, and would touch their eyes, and they would receive their sight.

AND He left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and He lodged there. Now in the morning as He returned into the city, He hungered. And when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.—St. Matthew xxi. 17—19.

THOUGH St. Mark tells us "the time of figs was not yet," still, this fig tree by putting forth leaves gave promise of fruit which it did not fulfil. Its destruction is a warning to all who make a profession of being religious, while their deeds and actions belie their profession. St. James says, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain:" and in the verse following, he tells us in what true religion consists. From those who make a great outward profession of religion much is expected. If by our words we allow men to think us holier than our neighbours, they will come to us expecting to find our deeds corresponding to our words. If they find nothing but leaves, we dishonour the Name of God and prove our religion vain. We must bring forth the "fruits of good living." These consist in self-restraint: we must "bridle our tongues;" we must restrain our tempers, and never let them get the better of us. We must be active in the service of God, ministering to Him in His people here below, growing daily in unworldliness and purity. This "miracle of pure destruction" teaches us another lesson. We ought to love God's character in both its sterner and milder aspects, just as it is revealed to us in the Bible. We ought to esteem His mercy, fatherly kindness, gentleness, and long-suffering; but we ought to esteem no less His justice, His severity, and His truth. We must love the Name of God; that is, the manifested and revealed character of God. Lord, grant that all who name the Name of Christ may live up to their profession and walk worthy of their vocation; may true religion day by day increase in us, and the love of Thy Name be firmly planted in our hearts.

Friday after the Ninth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

BUT what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise.. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father?—St. Matthew xxi. 28—31.

THE two sons represent two classes among the Jews: the openly rebellious, the wilful sinners, who say, "I will not;" and the self-righteous Pharisees who kept the letter of the law outwardly, who said, "I go, sir;" but being blind to their own imperfections saw no need of repentance and therefore "went not." The first, when convinced of their sin, repented and went. The two classes are still represented in every Christian country. There are the open transgressors of God's law,—the Esaus of society,—and there are the mere professors, who go through a certain devotional routine, but make it fit in with a life wholly devoted to self. Our Lord teaches us that the case of the former is more hopeful than that of the latter. When brought to a sense of their own sinfulness, the open, wilful transgressors will repent and obey; but the others are so wrapt up in their own self-esteem, and so accustomed to pride themselves on their self-righteousness, it is difficult, nay, almost impossible, to bring them to repentance. What God requires is not profession, but obedience. Our religion must cost us something. We are not to "offer unto the Lord of that which doth cost us nothing." Profession is easy. It is easy to say, "Lord, Lord," to go to Church, and to give in charity when it will bring credit to ourselves. But to repent, to correct our faults, to bridle our tempers, to restrain our evil impulses, and to gain the victory over self; all this is difficult. Yet it is all included in the word obedience. We are soldiers of Christ: perfect obedience is expected from every true soldier. Be it ours then to say, when called, "I go, sir;" and at once to engage in the fight, and never desist or lay aside our armour till in our Captain's strength we gain a complete victory.

Saturday after the Ninth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh. And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven.—Ephesians vi. 1, 4, 5, 9.

ST. PAUL gives useful practical advice to children and parents, to servants and masters, to kings and subjects. Children, subjects, servants, are exhorted to obey. If it be asked, Why should we obey man? the apostle in another place supplies the answer: All authority comes from God; "The powers that be are ordained of God." It is the ordering of His providence that we should submit to those He has set over us. If we disobey, we disobey not man, but God. Obedience must spring from the heart. When we obey from the heart we are "doing the Will of God." Obedience which springs from "singleness of heart" will obey not merely when commanded, but will be quick to do what it knows to be desired, even though not bidden. A sullen unwilling obedience is not obedience at all. The thing commanded may be done, but in the sight of God it is disobedience. It is when we obey from the heart, seeking to be like Christ, Who "learned obedience by the things He suffered," that our obedience is infinitely acceptable to God. Again, fathers and rulers are exhorted not to provoke their children; and masters are to be kind and considerate. God rewarded Abraham by revealing to him His mind and Will, because He knew that he "would command his children and his household after him, and that they should keep the way of the Lord." Oh, that every householder, every head of a family, every one who has many depending upon him, would think over such words as these, and strive to bring up their children and order their households so that the way of the Lord might be kept! Whatever station in life we may occupy, let us remember that "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

The Tenth Sunday after Trinity.

WHEREFORE I give you to understand, that no man speaking by the Spirit of God calleth Jesus accursed; and that no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost. Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit.—1 Corinthians xii. 3, 4.

THE Corinthian Church was largely endowed with the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. This was a cause of spiritual pride. The members of the Church esteemed each his own gift as superior to that of his neighbour. They became puffed up the one against the other, and in their self-esteem and self-seeking each magnified his own gift. St. Paul reproves them for this spiritual pride. He begins by showing them that the greatest of all gifts they have in common; that is, the gift to be able to call Jesus their Lord. They were Gentiles; they worshipped dumb idols. Jesus was preached unto them, and the Spirit Who was given to them enabled them to call Him Lord. Then he shows them that however the miraculous gifts might differ, one and the same Spirit had given them, or rather lent them. God was still the owner; they were but stewards of these manifold gifts. They were lent to them to edify the Church, not to be made a matter of glorying. They should not therefore look on the gifts as their own property, but as loans from God to be diligently used in His service, for their own growth in the spiritual life, the building up of those already in the Church, and the winning over to Christ souls which as yet knew Him not. This is the substance of St. Paul's teaching as to spiritual gifts to the Corinthians. May we not learn from it many valuable lessons for ourselves? The Holy Spirit imparts His gifts now as He did of old, save that now they are not outwardly and miraculously manifested. Our gifts differ; but they are all given for the one great purpose—the glory of God and the edification of His Church. Oh that we had grace to perceive the greatness of the gifts bestowed upon us! Oh that we had strength to use them in the Master's service, and courage to confess Jesus as our Lord, to the glory of the Father!

Monday after the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

JESUS answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven. But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.—St. Matthew xxii. 29—32.

IF we studied the Scriptures more we should not "err" concerning "the resurrection of the dead." Many tremble at the thought. They who yield themselves unrestrainedly to their lusts and passions may indeed tremble. They have worked their own works here, and when judged according to their works they shall "be found wanting." They shall have to meet Him Whom they have "crucified afresh and put to an open shame," and their judgment will correspond to their sin; they "shall awake to shame and everlasting contempt." Oh, that they would now pause, and while there is still time consider and repent! Is it worth their while to sacrifice their future for a few fleeting pleasures which bring no solid satisfaction? But they who fear God and try to do His will have no cause to tremble. Here they have loved His Word, and done such deeds of charity as they were able to do, and fulfilled their ordinary every day duties with the desire to please Him, and with simple faith have made diligent use of the means whereby we receive inward and spiritual grace from on high; their reward is sure. God in that day will bestow upon them the gift of eternal life. Oh, that we would ponder over all that is meant by the expression "the resurrection of the dead" to all those who trust God! It means freedom from sorrow, pain, and sin; freedom from death, and therefore from painful separation from those we love. It means still more than this; it means perfect peace, joy, happiness, brightness, and above all the beatific vision—"we shall see Him." May our souls be filled with an intense desire to share in all this glory!

Tuesday after the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

THEN spake Jesus to the multitude, and to His disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: all therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do for to be seen of men.—St. Matthew xxiii. 1—5.

OUR Lord's words teach us a useful practical lesson touching the Christian ministry. He bids the multitude observe and do what those who sat in Moses' seat bade them observe. But they were not to follow their example, because "they say, and do not." In the visible Church of Christ the "evil is ever mingled with the good." Even in the ranks of the ministry we meet with those who "say, and do not." What then is the duty of the people towards a pastor who sits in the seat of the apostles, teaching their doctrine, but whose example is contrary to his teaching? Here we are guided by the words of our Lord: "Observe and do" all your pastor so teaches, but follow not his example; or, as the Church says, "Use his ministry both in hearing the Word of God and in the receiving of the Sacraments:" because "The effect of Christ's ordinance is not taken away by the wickedness of the minister, nor the grace of God's gifts diminished from such as by faith and rightly do receive the Sacraments ministered unto them." Sad indeed, however, is it that any such should be found amongst our priests or deacons. Thanks be to God, the numbers are few; they would be fewer still if Churchmen did their duty, by praying for those already ordained, and searching into the previous history and character of those about to be ordained. We may all strengthen the hands of the bishops of our Church by thus praying and watching. Oh, how earnestly should we pray that the Church may ever be ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors, who both by their life and doctrine may set forth God's glory!

Wednesday after the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

BUT woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.—St. Matthew xxiii. 13, 14.

IN denouncing the scribes and Pharisees our Lord rebukes all those who satisfy themselves with an external and therefore insufficient righteousness. Lest we come under His condemnation we would do well to get a true idea of what genuine righteousness is. What constitutes pure spiritual devotion and holiness? The Pharisees believed that holiness consisted in regular observance of the externals of their religion; and there are many who follow their example still. There are many whose religion consists in formal prayers at stated times, regular attendance at the various services in the Church, and exact observance of rule. If properly employed these may be the means of attaining to holiness. But it is most dangerous to the spiritual life to rest in these, and flatter ourselves that we are living a life of true devotion. These are helps, and valuable helps; but if we found our perfection on them we deceive ourselves. In what then does genuine righteousness consist? Let us read the words and contemplate the works of our great Example, and we cannot help realising what perfect holiness is. We shall find that it consists in the knowledge of the goodness and greatness of God, in love to Him and desire to submit our wills to His, in diligent observance of all His commandments, in readiness to spend and be spent in His service, and doing all with no other aim than His glory, and from no other motive than love to Him Who deserves to be served and loved. Here is genuine righteousness—a simple following in the footsteps of Jesus. Denying ourselves as He denied Himself, obeying our Father as He obeyed Him, taking His sweet and light yoke upon us. Whenever we are in doubt let us ask Him for light and grace; light to know our duty, grace to enable us to do it.

Thursday after the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND as He sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto Him privately, saying, What shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in My Name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.—St. Matthew xxiv. 3—6, 13.

WE know not when the Son of man shall again come. The day and hour are hidden from us. He will come suddenly. He will come at a time when many shall be unprepared. He will come as a thief in the night; as a snare which falls unexpectedly on the bird. Our wisdom is to live in a state of preparedness; to think and act as if the Judgment were at hand. We can help ourselves much in this matter by picturing to ourselves Christ on the throne of judgment, and we standing at the judgment seat. Let us earnestly pray that this scene thus pictured by our imagination may help us to prepare. He Who will then be our Judge is now our Redeemer and Advocate. If we listen to His voice now, and obey His commands, He is, and ever will be, our Friend. Then we shall welcome His return as we should welcome our dearest and best loved friend returning from a lengthened absence. We have nothing to fear; everything to hope for. Are we prepared for the second coming of the Lord? If not, what excuse have we for being unprepared? Has not God done all in His power to draw us to Himself? He will not compel our wills. He leaves the will free to accept or refuse. But all else short of compulsion He has done. Why do we refuse to come to Him? True, difficulties beset the path of those who walk in the narrow way; but "he that endures to the end, the same shall be saved." Is it not worth enduring? Let us listen to an inspired interpretation of the expression "to be saved:" "In Thy Presence is fulness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Friday after the Tenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

IMMEDIATELY after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.—St. Matthew xxiv. 29, 30.

IT is not the way of God to strike before warning. For one hundred and twenty years He warned the contemporaries of Noah before He destroyed the unbelievers in the sudden destruction which He brought upon the world. The Jews in our Lord's time received ample warning; when they would not repent their city was hurled to the ground, not one stone being left on another. As the end of the world draws nigh warnings are not wanting. We shall be without excuse if we be unprepared when "the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the heavens." Yet many will be unprepared. Our Lord expressly says so. "The tribes of the earth shall mourn." They shall mourn because their hopes are destroyed; their pleasures, their possessions, their treasures taken from them. "The tribes of the earth" include the godless rich, the unbelieving wise ones, the indifferent of all sexes and ages, the unrepentant, and the wilfully disobedient. These shall "mourn," for they must part with all they prized. They had laid up for themselves no treasures in heaven, and their treasures on earth they must abandon. The "elect" shall be "gathered from the four winds." They have nothing to fear. On earth they looked forward to the heavenly country. In the midst of earthly things they did not forget spiritual things; nor did they neglect their real treasures for the unsatisfying pleasures of the world. They shall have their reward. They served God faithfully; they shall reign with Him throughout eternity. Oh, how thankful we ought to be for the many warning voices which the Lord causes us to hear! How thankful we ought to be for the time He gives us for repentance, and the varied means by which we may prepare for the great and terrible day of the Lord!

Saturday after the Tenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THEN shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.—St. Matthew xxv. 1, 2.

AS the time of His death draws nigh, the Saviour speaks parable after parable to the multitude, warning them to watch, to let their whole life be a continual going forth to meet the Bridegroom. In all these parables He looks beyond His death to the dispensation of the Spirit, during which men may prepare, and on to the time of His second coming, when those who are prepared shall enter in with Him to the marriage. The description of the ten virgins is important in every particular. Each took her own lamp. By this we are given to understand the first awakening to the care of the soul which distinguishes a member of Christ's Church from the utterly irreligious. Those who have been baptized, and of their own free will have ratified their vow in Confirmation, have taken their lamps. The Holy Spirit has kindled the light within them. They then "went forth." Each baptized and confirmed member of Christ's Church goes forth from a world of sin, and with his lamp burning seeks the Bridegroom. So far all the ten virgins are alike. But here comes in the difference; five were foolish, and five were prudent. Five thoughtlessly forgot that their lamps would need replenishing; five were thoughtful, and took oil in their vessels. We have seen that the light is the spiritual life kindled by the Spirit of God. It needs continual feeding. For this the foolish made no provision. The oil is the grace necessary to the sustenance of the spiritual life, which we receive through prayer, the Word of God, the holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ. By neglecting these or deferring to use them we imperil our salvation. It will be vain to cry, "Lord, open to us." Fair words are of little avail where grace, charity, good works are wanting. The good works of others cannot assist, they have little enough for their own use. The foolish neglected their means and opportunities, and the door was shut.

The Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.

BRETHREN, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the scriptures: and that He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: after that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once.—1 Corinthians xv. 1—6.

CHRIST appeared to His apostles on various occasions to confirm their faith in His resurrection, and to convince them of the great doctrine which was to form part of their teaching when they proclaimed the truth unto the world. He revealed to them something of the glory of His risen body to strengthen their belief and encourage them in coming trials and struggles. But there was another reason for His frequent appearances. He knew that false teachers would soon arise in the Church denying the resurrection, and yet claiming to be considered Christians. Therefore convincing proofs were necessary. These St. Paul was instructed to lay before the Church in Corinth. He first states the great facts of our Christianity as he had received them, and in accordance with what had been foretold in the Scriptures. Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He rose again the third day. To prove these great truths he brings forward the statements of eye-witnesses. Peter saw Him, and the twelve; five hundred brethren saw Him; St. James, and then he himself saw Him. The denial of the resurrection, and the necessity which the Holy Spirit saw of causing to be written this glorious chapter in proof thereof, should make us see our danger and lead us to earnest prayer for a living faith in our Church's creed. It is not sufficient to know it with a head knowledge, we must understand and believe it. Let us make each article in it a subject for meditation, and strive to show forth now the power of Christ's resurrection in our lives, that hereafter we may be partakers of His joys.

Monday after the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

THEN shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungred, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me.—St. Matthew xxv. 34—36.

WHENEVER we do works of charity from pure motives we minister to Christ. St. Paul learned through a revelation from heaven, that in persecuting the poor saints he was persecuting their Lord. "When the Son of man shall come in His glory," they who despised, slighted, neglected Him will behold Him face to face. He bore long their neglect and scorn; nay, He pleaded for them, He made intercession, He sent His Spirit to win them to Him. Now they must see Him as their Judge. They must hear the awful sentence, "Depart from Me, ye cursed." Let us consider well that this sentence is passed on those who neglect the means of grace and refuse to do the good works and works of charity which "God has prepared for us to walk in." How reassuring, on the other hand, the sentence of those who have been humbly obedient: "Come, ye blessed!" He calls them. He tells them why they are rewarded. In their humility they cannot believe that their poor works are worthy of so great reward. But what they did, they did to Christ. Oh, how blessed the privilege of almsgiving! What we present in the offertory we give to Christ; when we visit the sick and the afflicted we visit Christ; when we speak words of sympathy to the widow and orphan we minister to Christ. Do we desire to hear those blessed words, "Come, inherit the kingdom?" Let us consider our ways now. We have time and opportunity enough. How are we employing the gifts, the talents committed to our care? Oh, let us do every good work our hand findeth to do, not despising little things! There is nothing little in the sight of God, if done for His dear Son's sake.

Tuesday after the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

THE Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed Him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.—St. Matthew xxvi. 24, 25.

HOW very awful to think of a traitor amongst the chosen twelve! How sad that one so gifted should fall so low; that one who had walked with Christ, hearing His words, seeing His works, should be lost! What pain, what grief to the loving Saviour that one chosen by Him as His companion should betray Him! We are reminded of the sad complaint of the Psalmist: "They have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love." As we read the story of Judas' fall, let us not boastfully thank our God that we are not like him—a traitor to our friend. Rather let it be a terrible warning. We have many privileges, much outward nearness to Christ; we have received a plentiful measure of His grace, and can receive more and more by diligent attendance at the means of grace. Have we never "rewarded evil for good, hatred for His love?" Let us look back on our past lives. What fruit have we borne for all the care bestowed upon us, all the nourishment with which our souls have been fed? The divine flame of the Spirit has been lit in our souls; our bodies are the temples of the Holy Ghost. Have we never grieved the Spirit? Do we never vex Him? Are we in no danger of quenching the Spirit? If we suffer the flame to die out and expire just when the cry goes forth, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh;" is not our case perilously similar to that of Judas? Do we not make an unjust return for all the mercy, grace, and goodness of our God? Oh, let us be warned, we who have many privileges, who live in the midst of the Church's teachings and the Church's consolations! Let us determine that we will not be ungrateful for God's mercies, but that we will return good for His good, love for His love.

Wednesday after the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

He that betrayed Him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He: hold Him fast. And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, Master; and kissed Him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come?—St. Matthew xxvi. 48—50.

Jesus knew who would betray Him, who deny Him, who forsake Him. He bears all patiently, to teach us how we should endure when injured. Insult and injury could scarcely go further when Judas, one of the twelve for whom Christ had done so much, made the token of love the signal of his Master's betrayal. To what a depth of sin had Judas fallen! One sad passion cherished, led him on step by step to his ruin. His greed made him a liar, a hypocrite, a betrayer. How gentle was the Lord's reproof, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" He does not seek for information. He knew his infamous purpose. He desires to make one last earnest appeal to his conscience. "Friend;" even in the hour of betrayal Jesus calls him "Friend." Oh, how He must have desired to make him indeed His friend! How He must have desired that he would abandon the company in which he found himself, and choose the company of the true "Friend that sticketh closer than a brother!" How great is the Saviour's love! He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. When we were enemies He gave Himself for us. When we are betrayed into sin we may, if we listen, hear His voice saying, "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Why have you thrown yourself in temptation's way? Why do you yield to the temptation? He bids us even now think and repent. He recalls us to thoughts and deeds of holiness. Do we listen to His gentle reproof? Do we repent with a true repentance when we hear His pleading voice? Great indeed are our privileges. We are brought very near to Christ through His Church's means of grace. Let not sin reign in our mortal bodies to drag us down to Judas depths; but rather may we be led through our privileges to still greater heights, to still greater nearness to Christ.

THURSDAY AFTER THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY. EVENING.

AND after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the Man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly.—St. Matthew xxvi. 73—75.

ONE disciple had already betrayed his Master, all had forsaken Him, and now he who had received a special blessing from Christ, who had a more than earthly knowledge of His divine character, who had but a few hours before expressed his willingness to die for Him, denies Him. At first he simply denies under the pretence that he did not understand what was said. One sin leads to another. He must back up his first lie with another confirmed by an oath, and this leads on to a blasphemous utterance of oaths and curses. From what a height has St. Peter fallen! But the Master will not desert His servant even when he denies Him. He turns a gentle, loving, yet reproachful look on His apostle. The past is all spread out before his mental vision. The sense of his sin works in him not remorse, as in Judas, but true repentance. We would do well to place before us in imagination the whole scene; and as we do so, pray for grace that we may never by our words or conduct deny our loving, suffering, gracious Saviour. Let us be careful of the friends we make and the company we keep; lest, taking up for a time with the enemies of Christ, as Peter did, we be led by their example and conversation to deny Him before men. Let us beware of pride: it always comes before a fall. Let us not boastfully trust to our own powers; if we do we shall certainly deny Christ when temptation comes. If we yield to temptation, let us think of the Saviour at the right hand of God, and try to realise that He sees us, that His face is turned towards us. Then, leaving the scene of our temptation, let us go forth and shed bitter tears of true repentance.

Friday after the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THE governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let Him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.—St. Matthew xxvii. 21, 22, 24.

PILATE makes many attempts to avoid condemning Christ. More than once he pronounces Him innocent. At last by a symbolical action he desires to deceive himself, and make others believe that he is cleansed from all fault in the matter. He cannot, however, wash his soul clean. He has proved himself already an unworthy ruler and an unjust judge. He yields to the pressure brought to bear upon him because he was selfish and cowardly and had no love of truth and justice. So he first scourges, and then delivers Jesus to their will. Can we think of the awful sufferings of our Redeemer without being filled with a deep pity, and a hatred of sin which caused His sufferings? Can we think of them without deep contrition for our past sins, and an earnest determination not to be instrumental in crucifying Him afresh by any wilful sins in the future? Can we think of what He suffered from the leathern thongs of the Roman scourge, without an earnest prayer to God that by these stripes our souls may be healed? Do we remember that it was for our sakes He was thus despised? Does this thought make us love Him with a love far deeper than the hatred of the Jews, and to honour Him Whom they despised? Are we ready and willing to suffer pain, inconvenience, affliction for His sake Who suffered so much and so willingly for the great love with which He loved us? What return do we make for all His love? God grant that these sufferings may not have been, so far as we are concerned, in vain; but that they may bear fruit to the saving of our souls.

AND they crucified Him, and parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots. And sitting down they watched Him there; and set up over His head His accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.—St. Matthew xxvii. 35—37.

THE mystery of the cross is too great for us altogether to understand. We can, however, so far fathom it as to know that it was our sins which brought Christ to Calvary. Oh, how we should hate sin, and love Him Who died to redeem us from its power and punishment! As we read the story of Christ crucified do we lift up our hearts in prayer for grace to imitate His patience, to take up our cross and to follow Him? Simon the Cyrenian bore the material cross after the example of the Saviour, Who first "went forth bearing His cross." How blessed to be able thus to help Jesus in His weak and exhausted condition! Still more blessed are we when we take up our cross, the cross which our heavenly Father chooses and fits to our shoulders, and bear it patiently after the example of our loving Redeemer. At Calvary the painful journey ends, but the awfullest of all sufferings begins. Not merely the sufferings of body, but the sufferings of a loving heart longing for all men to be saved, and seeing them reject the only means of salvation. The derisive language of the rulers, the mocking of the soldiers, the jeering of the crowd did not move Him. That which stirred His pure soul to its inmost depths was that He had come to make all men pure from the stain of sin, but they, through unbelief, refused to accept the cleansing. The sacrifice for the sins of the whole world is complete; and God teaches us by the attendant miracles that His secrets are revealed to the righteous, that the hardest hearts shall break like the rocks that were rent, that the power of death was destroyed, for the graves should be opened and give up their dead, and Satan himself should acknowledge the Saviour's dominion and yield his spoil to One stronger than him.

The Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.

SUCH trust have we through Christ to God-ward: not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious? For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory.—2 Corinthians iii. 4—9.

ST. PAUL magnifies his office by comparing and contrasting it with the office committed to Moses. In doing so he shows that the glory of the legal dispensation is far inferior to that of the Gospel dispensation. The former was a ministration of death, the latter of life; the one a ministration of condemnation, the other a ministration of righteousness. Blessed be God, the dispensation under which we live is the dispensation of the Spirit; and the Spirit giveth life. If, then, we abide in Christ we have life; and there will be no condemnation for us if we walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. It is well, however, to remind ourselves that the simple fact of living in the Gospel dispensation is not sufficient. Abiding in Christ and obedience are necessary. If we abide not in Christ we shall be rotten branches, fit only to be gathered in bundles for the fire. The dispensation of the Spirit, which ought to minister to life, may through our wilfulness be made to minister unto death and condemnation. The Gospel may, according to its acceptance and use, be made a savour of death unto death, or of life unto life. Which will it be for each of us? If any one has not yet made his choice, "God waiteth to be gracious." He is reluctant to close the door; He graciously waits. Shall He wait in vain? God grant that we may accept His gracious gifts; and, abiding in Christ, may through the Spirit bring forth fruits of righteousness which shall be unto life eternal.

Monday after the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

WHEN the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathæa, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: he went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.—St. Matthew xxvii. 57—60.

FROM the day that Joseph of Arimathæa took down the body of Jesus the cross has been the special sign of the Christian's faith and the Saviour's love. How eloquently does it speak to us! How willingly do we take up the words of the apostle, and say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!" While His friends are paying the last honours to the dead body of the Christ, His enemies are unwittingly helping the great cause for which He died. The whole efficacy of His mediatorial work depends on the truth of the great facts of His death and resurrection. These have a principal part in our salvation; therefore we are taught to pray in our litany, "By Thy precious death and burial, by Thy glorious resurrection, good Lord, deliver us." Each proof then of these great facts is of importance. The Pharisees add yet another proof. They come to Pilate, announce to him the particular space of time after which Jesus had expressly stated He would rise again, and demand that "the sepulchre should be made sure until the third day." The stone is sealed and a watch set. Notwithstanding the seal and the watch, God "will not suffer His holy One to see corruption." This closes the history of our Lord's sufferings and of all the ignominy He underwent. And for whom and for what purpose did He suffer? "For us men, and for our salvation." Shall we not determine to make all the return in our power, by yielding ourselves willing sacrifices to Him, by loving Him with all the warmth of hearts warmed by His love, and by courageously living consistent lives in the knowledge and obedience of His Word!

Tuesday after the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God; as it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee. The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. And there went out unto him all the land of Judæa, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins.—St. Mark i. 1—5.

THE mission of John the Baptist was emphatically a mission of preparation. The key-note of his whole preaching was "Prepare." The mission of the Church in every age is the same. The key-note of the Church's teaching is "Prepare." Preparation for the second coming of Christ is our great duty. Do we keep this duty constantly before us? Do we understand all the depth of meaning that is contained in the petition in the Lord's Prayer, "Thy Kingdom come?" When we breathe this petition in prayer to God, do we determine to do all in our power to hasten the coming of the Kingdom? Are we preparing ourselves and helping others to prepare? If we wish to be ready when the Lord shall appear a second time in glory, we must mould our lives after the fashion of His divine and human character. We should seek to develop the contemplative and the active sides of our character. We should seek interior rest and peace, that the spiritual life may be deepened within us, and that there may be a gradual but decided growth in grace. When we know what rest and peace are, we shall be filled with zeal, and do what we can in our own sphere to set souls free and let poor sinners know that though their sins be as scarlet they may become like snow. We may thus encourage them to prepare for the second coming. Let us do the work God requires of us, and at the same time preserve a spirit of inward calmness, and leave the results to Him. But forget not to pray that when Christ appears again He may find His Church in a state of holiness and preparedness.

Wednesday after the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto Him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with devils. And all the city was gathered together at the door. And He healed many that were sick of divers diseases, and cast out many devils. And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, He went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.—St. Mark i. 32—35.

IF we follow the example of our Saviour we must labour actively and pray earnestly. Our Lord, in order that He may get a quiet undisturbed hour for communion with His Father, "rises up a great while before day." He had spent the previous day in active labour. He had taught the people of Capernaum, speaking such living, burning words that the people were astonished at His doctrine. He had healed the man with the unclean spirit, raised up Simon's wife's mother from her bed of sickness, and, when the evening drew on and the people were free from the binding obligation of the Sabbath, the "whole city was gathered at the door," and He healed the sick, rebuked the devils, and taught the people. Notwithstanding this long day of labour, He rises up next morning "a great while before day," thus setting us an example that when we are busiest still we must find time for prayer. The early hours of the day are specially suited to wrestling with God in prayer. We are then fresh; we are as yet undisturbed by the many things which must needs distract our thoughts once the business of the day begins. Let us always rescue from sleep sufficient time in the early morning for holding undisturbed communion with our God, and for earnest prayer to Him to strengthen us for the duties, the trials, the joys of the coming day. Let us pray in faith, and wait for and expect an answer. God's promises never fail; and He has promised to hear the petitions of them that ask in His Son's Name. Thus let us divide our lives, after the pattern of our Lord's life here and the angels' life in heaven—between active labour and earnest worship.

Thursday after the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AGAIN He entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that He was in the house. And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and He preached the word unto them. And they come unto Him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four. And when they could not come nigh unto Him for the press, they uncovered the roof where He was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay. When Jesus saw their faith, He said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.—St. Mark ii. 1—5.

IT has been said that "faith and love overcome all difficulties to get to Christ." We cannot sufficiently admire the faith and love of this poor man and his bearers. They give proofs of their faith by their persevering efforts to draw near to Christ. Jesus needed no proof, for He could read the thoughts of the man; He knew and could fathom the depths of his heart; He saw at once he had the inward faith to be healed. We cannot confidently assert why our Lord used the peculiar formula, "Thy sins be forgiven thee," to heal him of his bodily infirmity. It may have been the man felt the burden of his sin more than the burden of the palsy. It may have been that he had adopted the popular belief amongst the Jews, and connected his severe suffering with some great sin for which he considered it a punishment. Whatever the reason, one thing is certain: he received more than he expected. This is the rule of all God's gifts. They far exceed in number and blessedness what our minds feebly conceive. He departs glorifying God. Do we not feel our souls stirred within us as we read the account of the mercies which the faith and love of this poor man won for both body and soul? Do we desire similar mercies? Let us prove our faith and love by determined and persevering efforts to draw near to God. We can help others also who are too feeble to come by themselves; we can carry them, if need be, and lay them before the Cross of the Redeemer.

Friday after the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND He entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And He saith unto the man, Stand forth. And He saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when He had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, He saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other.—St. Mark iii. 1, 3—5.

THE Saviour spent His life going about doing good. He thought not of convenience or inconvenience. He teaches the multitude, He heals the individual sinner and sufferer, He reveals blessed truths to His disciples. He is never weary in doing good. Though His bodily frame be almost exhausted, time for the needful rest and refreshment is refused. He has a work to do; and it must be done before the night should put an end to all work. Do we desire that ours should be noble lives, courageous lives, lives pleasing and agreeable to God? Let us study minutely the life of Christ. There is no life so noble, so beautiful as His. And His noble life is crowned by a death unmatched for its self-sacrificing love. To some, a life spent in active service and holy meditation and prayer seems undesirable. But if we look on it in the light of eternity, it is the only noble, desirable, lovely life. What fruits have we from a life of self-gratification? What blessedness is there in spending everything on ourselves? What happiness results from planning and practising schemes for gratifying our unholy passions? The end of these things is death. But a life spent in active service for the glory of our Father results in inward peace here and blessedness hereafter. Let us pray for grace to see that such a life is noblest and best. As we learn to see this, let us pray for grace to persevere even unto the end. Let us struggle to free ourselves from worldly lusts, and rise into the purer atmosphere of the heavenly life of Jesus.

Saturday after the Twelfth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND He looked round about on them which sat about Him, and said, Behold My mother and My brethren! For whosoever shall do the Will of God, the same is My brother, and My sister, and mother.—St. Mark iii. 34, 35.

OBEDIENCE to the Will of God diligently practised unites us in closest bonds to Christ. Our Lord Himself through His example taught us the necessity as well as the blessedness of obedience. He came to obey the Will of Him that sent Him: "Lo, I come to do Thy Will, O God." He asks nothing of us which He has not already simplified for us by setting us an example. Obedience does not come naturally to us. It is not easy to submit our wills to the will of another. It comes in direct collision with our self-love and self-esteem. It is, in fact, opposed to all the natural instincts of the human spirit. Therefore it is necessary to learn obedience. The Saviour Himself, "though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience." He learned it, "by the things which He suffered." The disciple must not expect to be above his Master, and we need not expect to attain to obedience without a struggle. Is it not worth the struggle? Even though we must suffer in order that we may learn obedience, is it not worth the suffering? Does not the reward stimulate us to work that we may learn thoroughly our lesson? "Whosoever shall do the Will of God" shall be more closely united to the Son of God than those who were related to Him here by the tie of relationship in the flesh. Oh, the blessedness of putting self aside, of giving up our own will, of doing all things according to the guidance of the Will of God alone! Remember, we must do *all* things according to the guidance of His Will. Not only must we submit in greater things, but also in the least. However trifling the occasion may seem, if God sees our will set aside He sees us striving to fulfil His Will, and that is pleasing to Him and acceptable in His sight. Each act of obedience draws us nearer to our God and unites us in closer bonds to our Saviour.

The Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.

IS the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.—Galatians iii. 21, 22.

THROUGHOUT every age of the world man has felt that the most important question that can be asked is, "What shall I do to be saved?" A time comes to every man when property, houses, lands fade into insignificance before the awful thought of an impending eternity. Alas, that men should leave the answer to this question a matter of unconcern till it be too late! May God help us to feel a real anxiety about the answer, and suffer us not to cease inquiring till all be made clear. Our Epistle to-day will help all earnest inquirers. We cannot be saved by the law. If it were possible to keep the whole law without offending in one point, either by thought, word, or deed, then we could be saved by it. But there is "no man that sinneth not." Daily we must confess that we have committed manifold sins, that we have provoked most justly God's wrath against us. The law, then, must deal with us as transgressors; it can but pass sentence of death upon us. How then shall we be saved? "The Scripture hath concluded all under sin," and therefore under sentence of death, "that the promise," that is, of life eternal, "might be given" as a free gift "to them that believe." Our belief must not be barren or unfruitful. There is no true faith without love, and no true brotherly love without faith in the Lord. Love is the revelation of faith; love is the fulfilling of the law. When a man believes in Christ, he sets out upon a new and holy life. Christ puts His Spirit into the hearts of His people, He sheds abroad in them His love, and they feel constrained to live no longer to themselves but to Him; to devote themselves, body, soul, and spirit, to His service. Are we "working out our own salvation;" believing in Christ Jesus, and trusting in His life-giving power alone to enable us to do so?

Monday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND He said, So is the Kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground; and should sleep, and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come.—St. Mark iv. 26—29.

WE cannot doubt that by "the man" who cast the seed into the ground is meant in the first place God Himself; after Him those commissioned by Him to speak in His Name, to act by His authority, and to spread abroad the holy faith. The parable teaches us that the growth of the Word sown in the "good ground" of an "honest and good heart" is imperceptible and gradual. There are certain stages in the growth of the spiritual life, and we must not look for the perfected fruit till these various stages have been gone through. Genuine good work in the Kingdom of Nature is not done by sudden bursts, but by patient and continuous labour. The same is true of the spiritual life. We must go from "strength to strength." One step in grace must lead on to another; one virtue attained, we must acquire another. We must never be faint-hearted, never weary in the acquisition of virtue. It is useless to begin the race well and outstrip our competitors, if we then lay down our oars and sink back on the soft cushions of ease and self-indulgence. The current will swiftly sweep us away; and perhaps when we would desire to take up our oars again we find the current too strong for us, and we are swept into the gulf below. If we would stem the tide and reach the goal we must use exertion and make steady progress. If our progress be slow it is a sign of weakness; let it be a cause of humbling ourselves before God, and asking Him for His strength. If our progress is in accordance to the gifts we possess, let us thank God, and acknowledge that it is His strength that has enabled us to do what we have done, and pray for still more grace that we may go on to a perfect end.

AND when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him.—St. Mark v. 2—4.

SATAN appears to have had greater power over men's bodies at the time of our Lord's first Advent than he has had since. Christ was manifested to destroy the works of the devil. The devil's power has been curtailed; the results of Christ's victory are already partially manifest; they will be more and more revealed as men are taught to believe in Him Who has conquered, and Who will make them "more than conquerors" if they trust Him. The description of the sufferings of this poor demoniac is very awful. He was completely under Satan's power, from whom he had received supernatural strength. He broke all his chains and bonds. It was beyond man's power to restrain him; he was an object of terror to the whole neighbourhood. The "strong man armed" kept for a time his goods in safety. But now "the stronger than he" appears on the scene. All is at once changed. The evil spirits cower down before the superior power of Jesus, nay, they are compelled through fear to "worship Him." What a change comes over the man! Before Jesus spoke the word of release he was a terror to the neighbourhood and a burden to himself. At the word of Jesus he sits at His feet, "clothed, and in his right mind." Life,—life and salvation had come to him, and he longs to abide with Him Who had shown so great mercy to him. But Jesus has a work for him to do. He must bear witness for the Christ amongst his friends and kindred. Do we, who have received great mercies from God, bear witness to His goodness? Do we tell of His mercies, that others may hear of and desire similar blessings, and learn to worship and praise Him Who gives them?

Wednesday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THERE are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake. Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God; but in works they deny Him, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.—St. Titus i. 10, 11, 15, 16.

IN the days of Jeremiah, the Jews, while increasing their backslidings, still made a profession of faith in God. Though hating the truth, they would piously exclaim, "The Lord liveth." We find the same tendency in them in St. Paul's day. When giving directions to Titus concerning "they of the circumcision," he bids him "rebuke them sharply," because, while "they profess to know God, in works they deny Him." How very awful to confess God with their mouths, and deny Him by their works! But is it the Jews only who do so? Are there not many who are Christians by name and profession who thus act? Are there not many who cry, "Lord, Lord," to whom Christ will have to say, "I know you not." Do we desire that our religion should be something more than a mere lip-religion? Do we wish not merely to seem religious, but to be religious? Let us consider well and often what religion consists in. We may suffer ourselves to be guided here by our baptismal vow, when we promised to renounce the devil and his works, to believe in God and to serve Him. Do we repent of, and renounce all adhesion to sin? Have we a firm belief in God, and in all the Articles of the Christian faith? Do we desire to be built up in this most holy faith? And do we strive to obey God's holy will and commandments? Do we place the high standard of Christian perfection before us, and seek to attain to it? Oh, that we had more faith, more earnestness, that we might confess God not only with our lips, but by our works! Oh, that each day we might become sounder in doctrine, and holier in our lives!

Saturday after the Thirteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told Him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And He said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while.—St. Mark vi. 30, 31.

HOW very touching and beautiful is the tender solicitude of the Saviour for His disciples, now wearied both in mind and body! They had returned from their first missionary tour, and "gathered themselves together unto Jesus" at the time and place which He had appointed unto them. They tell Him all they did and taught. Their Master is not unthoughtful as to their needs. He invites them to come apart with Him, and rest a while. Blessed are they who, when their day's work is ended, "gather themselves together unto Jesus, and tell Him all they have done." If they be weary in body with their toil, or burdened in their souls with a sense of sin, or tired in heart and mind from the contradiction of sinners, they need not sink under their load; the voice of Jesus bids them "come apart, and rest a while." He, and He alone, can and will give us all we need. When wearied in body He will give us rest. Not the rest of idleness or ignorance, but the rest which Christ gives to all who work and labour for Him, a rest which never fails those who honestly seek it. When burdened with a sense of sin we "gather ourselves to Jesus," He will give us pardon and peace. When tired in heart and mind He bids us come apart with Him; shows us what He has endured from the contradiction of sinners; tells us that we too must endure, that the cross we have to bear is fitted to our strength, and more strength will be given according as it is needed. Thus He fills us with a sense of rest. What once fretted us now ceases to do so. Peace, the peace which Jesus gives and which the world cannot take away, spreads over our souls, and we experience the blessedness of those who make it their daily custom to "gather themselves together unto Jesus," and tell Him all they have done, and taught, and learned throughout the day.

The Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.

I SAY then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.—Galatians v. 16—18, 22—24.

WE cannot too often or too devoutly ponder over the great need we have of all the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit we can do nothing. The "old man" is strong within us. It follows blindly, wilfully, after the lusts of the flesh. We cannot understand even the depth of the wickedness of our evil nature unless the Spirit enlighten us; nor have we strength to root it out from our hearts unless the Spirit aid us. So long as we are in the body there will be a strife, a struggle for the mastery between our two natures. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh." But we should make sure that as each day closes the spiritual forces have gained ground, and the forces of the enemy have been driven back. Consider well the purposes for which the gifts of the Holy Spirit have been given to us. "They that are Christ's," those in whom God's Spirit dwells, "have crucified the flesh;" therefore we should not be led any longer by its "affections and lusts." Do we find the power of sin becoming weaker, and the desire to obey God's Will becoming stronger? Do our failures cause us pain and shame, and do we rejoice when we have successfully resisted temptation? Do we find ourselves ready and willing to perform all actions of virtue, even when difficult and requiring considerable sacrifices on our part? They are indeed happy and blessed who by the aid of the Holy Spirit are daily gaining triumphs over their evil nature; daily obtaining from God "the increase of faith, hope, and charity."

WHEN He had called all the people unto Him, He said unto them, Hearken unto Me every one of you, and understand: There is nothing from without a man, that entering into him can defile him: but the things which come out of him, those are they that defile the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.—St. Mark vii. 14, 15, 21—23.

THE fearful tendency to sin remains even in those who are "baptized and born again in Christ," and causes them "to offend in many things." It is a consequence of original sin. Who is there that knows himself ever so little but is conscious of this tendency, which mars and hinders almost all he does? If it be allowed to have uninterrupted sway over us, our hearts will become full of evil thoughts which will develop into evil deeds. Oh, that we were more on our guard against this tendency to evil! If we would be thoroughly on our guard we must learn to know ourselves. Very often, instead of trying to know ourselves, we try to disguise our thoughts and evade that self-knowledge which is so necessary to a Christian. How sinful, how foolish! By disguising our thoughts and hiding our defects we are heaping up fresh hindrances in our way. Every day that we put off the work of self-reformation we make it more difficult. Oh, let us examine our hearts before they are altogether given up to evil! Let us examine our motives, our leanings, our inward desires. Let us judge ourselves honestly, and tear out every root of bitterness from within. God will not fail to help those who thus try to help themselves. He will shed a bright light on those who confess their blindness, give the powerful aid of His Spirit to those who confess their weakness, and bring all who confess their ignorance to a more certain knowledge of Him. Every step we make in advance He will increase our light, our strength, and our knowledge; till in the end we attain to purity of heart and life, and are made fit for our eternal inheritance.

Tuesday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

A CERTAIN woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of Him, and came and fell at His feet: the woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought Him that He would cast forth the devil out of her daughter. But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs. And she answered and said unto Him, Yes, Lord: yet the dogs under the table eat of the children's crumbs. And He said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter.—St. Mark vii. 25—29.

HOW often we find that those whom God loves most He tries and proves the longest! The Lord commends the faith of the Syrophenician woman, and yet He tries and proves that faith severely. Though a Gentile, she believes in the power and mercy of the Saviour. When she first addresses Him, "He answers her not a word." This is the first trial of her faith. We may learn a useful lesson for ourselves here. If our prayers remain unanswered let us not be cast down or discouraged. Our Lord teaches us both by His actions and by His parables that God at times withholds an answer to our prayers to make us persevere and pray with added fervour. The silence of Christ had this effect on this Gentile woman. Now her faith must be more severely tried. "It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to the dogs." With what true humility as well as perseverance does she answer! "Yes, Lord;" be it so, if only I be permitted to pick up the crumbs of Thy love and mercy. What an example of faith and humility and love! It was not for herself she made the request. There was nothing selfish in it. Do we bring the sorrows, the sufferings, the sins of others before our God in prayer? Do we desire and earnestly pray for the conversion of those in error? When we pray for others, have we a living faith that God will hear our prayers? If the answer be delayed do we persevere, and continue wrestling with God till He vouchsafes a reply? Lord, give us more faith, and help us to persevere in prayer.

Wednesday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

NOW the disciples had forgotten to take bread, neither had they in the ship with them more than one loaf. And He charged them, saying, Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, and of the leaven of Herod. And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have no bread. And when Jesus knew it, He saith unto them, Why reason ye, because ye have no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither understand? have ye your heart yet hardened?—St. Mark viii. 14—17.

OUR Lord in His teaching frequently founded important lessons on the observations of bystanders. It is very probable that the shortness of their supplies had formed the subject of conversation among the disciples, as in both Gospels the fact that "they had forgotten to take bread" is mentioned before our Lord uttered His warning. Christ takes advantage of the occasion to warn His disciples against the leaven of the Pharisees and the Herodians. The disciples were always slow in understanding our Lord's teaching. They do not grasp His meaning now, and therefore must listen to the well-merited rebuke, "Have ye your heart hardened?" If their hearts were not hardened they could not fail to understand that He was speaking to them of the doctrines of the Pharisees, that is, their self-righteousness and their hypocrisy; and the doctrines of the Sadducees, that is, their worldliness, unbelief, and sensuality. If their hearts had not been hardened they could not have doubted His power to supply their wants if only they had thought on the meaning of the miracles they had already seen. If the Saviour was bodily present with us now, would He have no cause to rebuke? We have far greater advantages than had the disciples in the days of His flesh, and yet how often do we misunderstand His words; how often do we fail to grasp the meaning of His teaching! Is not our faith very weak at times? Do we not harden our hearts and refuse to hear and see His divine words and works? If we are inclined to wonder at the dulness of the disciples and their want of faith let us look within, and see whether we, with all our advantages, are not still more dull and faithless.

THURSDAY AFTER THE FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.
EVENING.

AND one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto Thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit; if Thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us. Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.—St. Mark ix. 17, 22—24.

WE have good reason to thank God for permitting this expression of the father of the lunatic boy to be recorded for our learning: "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." How often do we feel the value of faith; how often do our Lord's words recur to us, "All things are possible to him that believeth!" When we look within we see that our faith is very imperfect, that it is dashed with many a speck of doubt; we are almost tempted to question whether our faith be real faith at all, so clouded is it by unbelief or misbelief. At such a time let us think what power this man's feeble, imperfect faith had, what a blessing it won from the Redeemer; and let us cry out, "Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief." Such a prayer will not remain unanswered. He will not let us depart empty. He will give us proofs of His love. These proofs will increase our faith; they will give us courage to pray with still more earnestness; and as we pray our faith will strengthen. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. However weak our faith, however imperfect, let us not hesitate to come to Him. He will gently fan the smouldering spark till it burns up into a bright and steady flame. The fact that we feel the weakness of our faith shows that we have some. Let this thought encourage us to seek the help of our Lord. He marks our first effort to arise. He comes to meet us. He stretches out His hand to help. He tells us that all things are possible to those who believe; He whispers to our inmost souls to trust Him. As He thus speaks we feel our faith becoming firmer. As faith increases so obtain we from Him the desires of our heart.

Friday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND He sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all. And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them: and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive one of such children in My Name, receiveth Me.—St. Mark ix. 35—37.

NO sooner does Christ reveal to His disciples the facts of His betrayal and death than they begin to dispute among themselves who should be the greatest. They did not understand the words of their Master in all the awful depth of their meaning. They grasped in part what He meant, but they feared to ask Him for further information. They put their own construction on His words. They leave out of sight what He says about death. Soon—they know not how soon—He is to be glorified. He shall reign as King. Who shall be greatest in that Kingdom? Who shall be first of all, and lord over his brethren? How little as yet did they know what kind of Kingdom Christ came to establish, and what kind of subjects He desired! He "took a child, and set him in the midst of them." This sweet emblem of humility and innocence must teach them. It is as though He said, "Ye desire power, and influence, and lordship over your brethren: desire them not; they will not bring true happiness, neither will they be of any value in seeking the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness; rather are they a hindrance. Seek to be childlike, seek the grace of humility; for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble." The lesson is as needful for us now as for the disciples of old. Is there not much disputing now who shall be greatest? Do we not jostle each other in our overhaste to gain the riches and honours of the world? How few perceive and acknowledge that these are snares and delusions! Yes; we too require the little child to be set in our midst, that we may learn innocence and humility. Would that the same mind were in us as was in Christ Jesus, that we might humble ourselves as He did! Then God, faithful to His promise, would in due time exalt us to a place in His Kingdom.

Saturday after the Fourteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND they brought young children to Him, that He should touch them: and His disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God.—St. Mark x. 13, 14.

OUR Church, in the brief exhortation upon this passage in the Baptismal Service, shows that she considers it a warrant for Infant Baptism. It proves that Christ desires little children to be brought to Him. Under the old covenant God suffered little children of eight days old to be brought into close relationship to Him. Under the new dispensation Jesus blames those who keep them from Him. But how can we bring them to Jesus and dedicate them to His service save in Baptism? When we bring them we should not doubt but that He will "favourably receive" and bless them. The infants whom Jesus here took up in His arms were capable of receiving a blessing from Him though they were of too tender an age to understand His words and action. So likewise children of a tender age brought to Christ in Baptism and dedicated to His service receive from Him a blessing. That blessing consists of membership of Christ's body, adoption into God's family, and a right to an eternal inheritance, if they continue to "lead the rest of their life according to that beginning." Jesus accompanied the blessing by an outward sign—"He took them up in His arms." By this "outward gesture and deed He declared His good will toward them." So the outward sign in Baptism is a pledge to assure us of the reception of the inward and spiritual grace. When we witness the baptism of infants let us not be indifferent or careless on-lookers. Let us earnestly join with the congregation in prayer to God for His blessing, and that the child may grow up in the faith of the Church and remain a faithful member of the same. And for ourselves, pray that we may be put in remembrance of our own profession; which is, to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him.

The Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.

GOD forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.—Galatians vi. 14—16.

SINCE the first foundation of the Kingdom of Christ the Cross has been to the true Christian the sign of blessing and peace. It reminds us not only of the Crucified One, but of all that is dear to the Christian. Each great thought, each holy command, each precious promise is closely linked to it. It unveils the highest and holiest love—the love of the Father, Who spared not His Son for our sakes; the love of the Son, Who counted it all joy to bear the Cross for us and our salvation. What the rainbow is in the heavens, that the Cross is on earth. A sign of grace, around which the sorrowful and heavy laden gather, and find the comfort they so desire; a sign of security against being swept away in the torrent of sin, or drowned in an abyss of iniquity. The Cross bears witness, as nothing else can do, to the awfulness of sin and its fearful curse. It was on account of sin that the Son of God must die on the Cross. It is when we stand in thought beneath the Cross and behold the sufferings of our Redeemer that we realise what sin is. We learn there the awful punishment due to sin, and there we learn gratitude; we learn to thank our Saviour Who saved us from the power and punishment of sin. Have we not good cause then to take up the words of St. Paul, and say, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ?" Do we not feel constrained to take up daily our cross to follow Christ? to follow Him Who goes before us, Who encourages us? to follow on whithersoever He leads; over every kind of road, hard and easy, rough and smooth? As many as thus follow, "as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy."

Monday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

JESUS beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow Me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.—St. Mark x. 21, 22.

THIS young ruler had everything that this world could give—wealth, power, influence—and yet he was not content. He longed for something which as yet he had not. The haste with which he came shows the earnestness of his longing; the reverent and humble position he assumed shows how honestly he desired an answer to his question. His case is a remarkable one. He is persuaded that he has kept all the commandments from his youth up, and yet he feels there is something wanting. There was much that was good, much that was promising in his character. Jesus, with an earnest penetrating look, sees into the depths of his soul, and "beholding him loved him." Now He will prove him. With the utmost sincerity the young ruler says, "What lack I yet?" Jesus soon convinces him. He had not looked within to see whether or not he had set up an idol in his heart. He had not taken time to search his heart to find out which he worshipped most, God or gold. "Go thy way," Jesus would say; "cast down thine idol, grind it to powder, and come, take up the cross, and follow Me." He counts the cost, finds the sacrifice too great, and goes away grieved. Have we set up an idol in our hearts? Oh, how manifold are the idols we may set up! One sets up wealth, another pleasure, another business, another scientific research, another wife or child. Whatever draws us away from God is an idol. Every idol must be cast down. No matter what the cost; no matter what the sacrifice; we must rid ourselves of every hindrance. If we listen to our conscience it will tell us plainly what we ought to do, for it is the voice of God within us. When we know our duty, let us determine by God's help to make the sacrifice necessary to accomplish it.

Tuesday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND Jesus went into the temple, and began to cast out them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves; and would not suffer that any man should carry any vessel through the temple. And He taught, saying unto them, Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves.—St. Mark xi. 15—17.

THE Church is the house of God; it is also the house of prayer. The very name "house of God" speaks to us of the more immediate Presence of the Almighty. It is true that God is everywhere. Wherever we seek Him we shall find Him. If we fly from Him we cannot escape His Presence. But we are taught to believe that He manifests Himself in some places after an especial manner; and we are taught to attribute to such places an especial holiness on account of this indwelling of the great God and Lord. Therefore on entering the house of God we should try to realise His Presence; reverently we should lift up our hands to Him in prayer for ourselves, our fellow-worshippers, and for those who minister. When present at the services we should remember that the house of God is a house of prayer, and be careful to make it such to ourselves. The chief object with which we ought to come up to the house of God is to use it as a house of prayer and for close communion with the Triune God. Hearing the Word of God expounded is useful; but we are not to regard it as of equal importance with prayer and the administration of the Sacraments. By uniting in public prayer and partaking of the Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ we testify to the world the union which exists between us and our God, and between us and our fellow-men; we honour God, and call down the blessing promised to united believing prayer offered up in the Name of Jesus Christ. When in the house of God let us join with heart and voice in the prayers and praises. We shall be then sure of obtaining the petitions we desire, if for our true, our spiritual well-being.

Wednesday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND He began to speak unto them by parables. A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the winefat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard.—St. Mark xii. 1, 2.

CHRIST'S object in speaking parables to the people was that those who heard Him with a good will might partially understand and be led on to question Him, and so learn from Him and gain a deeper insight into the truth. Those who refused the privilege of questioning Him should abide in their ignorance. Christ is as ready now as He was then to enlighten our minds and understandings. But we must approach Him in prayer. We must ask Him for the blessings He is willing to give. Let us then earnestly pray that our hearts may be open for the reception of His light and truth. The vineyard in this parable is an image of God's Kingdom. When He had prepared it and fenced it in, and planted it with the choicest vines, He let it out to the Jewish people. Instead of tending the vineyard and yielding to the owner the fruits thereof, they rebelled against God, and refused to listen to and obey the exhortations and commands of His prophets. Even His Son, His well-beloved, "they took and killed." The vineyard was therefore taken away from them and given into the care of the Christian Church. Are we as a Church tending the vineyard? Are we rooting out the thorns and briers of our besetting sins? Do we carefully prepare the ground of our hearts? Are we producing the good fruits of righteousness? The vineyard was given into our care and keeping on account of the unfaithfulness of the Jews. Let us not be "highminded, but fear; if God spared not" His own chosen people, "let us take heed lest He spare not" us. We shall "stand" if we remain faithful to our trust, if we "continue in His goodness;" otherwise we too shall be "cut off."

THURSDAY AFTER THE FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.
EVENING.

AND Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.—St. Mark xii. 29—31.

AS we read our Lord's simple but beautiful summary of the ten commandments, and then look within and examine our own thoughts, and feelings, and lives, we must feel humiliated to the very dust. How helpless we feel as we think of the length and breadth, the height and depth of this command "to love God with all our hearts!" How sinful we feel as we think of the second great command, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself!" Even the best of men must cry out in their helplessness, "Who is sufficient for these things?" We can but adopt the prayer of the publican as we remember our shortcomings, "God be merciful to me a sinner." There are many who think they love God, but deceive themselves. We cannot love God and lead lives of selfishness and sinful ease. If we love God, our thoughts, our conversation, our lives will prove it. Our thoughts being purified, our conversation will be pure. Holiness will reign within, and our lives will be holy. Again, if we are led by the love of God we shall love our neighbour. God loves him; He cares for him, and provides for him, and bestows blessings upon him. If we love God we will love those whom He loves. Our love must not be an idle, fruitless love. Where it is possible we must do our neighbour good. We must rejoice in his prosperity, and sympathise with him in his adversity. At all times we should pray for him, asking from God the same spiritual blessings for him as for ourselves. Thus we shall prove our love for our neighbour, and our love for our neighbour will prove our love for God. The sweetness, the joy of loving God will afford us countless delights, far exceeding all that earth can give or bestow.

Friday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

JESUS sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much. And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And He called unto Him His disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.—St. Mark xii. 41—44.

GOD values our gifts according to the willing mind with which they are given. He will judge us and our gift, not according to what we have not, but according to what we have. If a man has nothing to give save a cup of cold water, and gives this from the lofty motive of love for God and love for man, it will be accepted and he rewarded as much as if the gift had been gold or precious stones. But we must remember that our almsgiving must be according as God has prospered us. If we have much and yet give sparingly, we need not expect a blessing. Our Lord commends this poor woman because she had given all that she had, even all that at the time she had to live upon. If a rich man had put in a like amount he would have received no commendation. Her gift was the outcome of a loving heart. A like sum from the rich man would prove that he had an unloving, grudging heart. It is contemptible to hear a rich man speak of his "mite" when he gives some mere trifle. His "mite," if he understood the word, would mean his "all." Love ennobles the littleness of the gift when we have but little to give. But "if we have much we should give plenteously," and so gather to ourselves "a good reward in the day of necessity." They who are "rich in this world should be ready to give and glad to distribute." This brings a reward far, far above the value of the gift, however great it may be; "a good foundation" is laid up "against the time to come, that they may attain eternal life."

Saturday after the Fifteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THE Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch.—St. Mark xiii. 34—37.

THESE verses form a fitting conclusion and practical application to the solemn discourse of our Lord on the "last things." The Saviour represents Himself as a man taking a far journey and giving authority to his servants to watch. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. In the Church there are different offices and administrations. To the three orders of the ministry, the bishops, priests, and deacons, is given authority and power. The porter, the primate of each national Church, is commanded to watch. Work of a varied kind is given to every man; that is, to all the baptized members of Christ's Church. We have all our work to do. We should ask God for grace to ponder "the last things," that we may do our work more efficiently. If we thought of the near approaching end of all things, how differently would we act. Let us remember that death does not end all. There are some who wish that it did. There are some for whom it would be well if it did. But it stands written, "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." When we think of death, judgment, and eternity, how can we cherish pride or false ambition in our hearts? What are the sinful pleasures of this world? They are of but a moment's duration. They give no lasting satisfaction. And we shall be brought into judgment for them. What is the wealth, what the honours of this world, if in gaining them we lose our own soul? Remember the judgment. Let us try and realise the awful scene on the last great day. We know not when the summons may go forth, therefore watch, work; let us not be found sleeping, for sloth as well as sin condemns.

The Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.

I DESIRE that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.—Ephesians iii. 13—19.

WHEN Christ dwells in our hearts we are rooted and grounded in love. When rooted in love we can comprehend something of the love of Christ. To know the love of Christ in all its depth and fulness is beyond our powers. It passeth knowledge. The love of Christ is powerful in producing fruits. It converts us to God, it transforms our wills, it conforms us to the Will of God, it unites us to Him, and makes us cling to Him. It is a "power that worketh in us." It works till we become penetrated with the love of God and become one with Him Who loves us. The love of Christ draws us away from external things. The love of worldly things and devotion to them cannot exist in the soul together with the love of Christ. In proportion to the strength of this love is our hatred of sin. The love of Christ is unselfish. He loves in order that He may give. He gives liberally and freely, and all out of love. When He commands us to love in return, and obey, it is not that He may gain anything by us or from us; it is altogether for our advantage. What folly, what madness to disobey! Disobedience can only injure ourselves. What folly, to refuse compliance to the commands of God—commands which He enforces not for His gain but for ours! Let us adore Christ's bountiful love, and ascribe praise, and adoration, and thanksgiving, and glory, "unto Him Who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think."

EVENING.

AFTER two days was the feast of the passover, and of unleavened bread: and the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by craft, and put Him to death. But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar of the people. And Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went unto the chief priests, to betray Him unto them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. And he sought how he might conveniently betray Him.—St. Mark xiv. 1, 2, 10, 11.

TO what a depth of sin and misery did one sinful habit lead the betrayer Judas! His covetous mind was ever engaged in thinking how he could add to his store. He murmured against Mary when she anointed the feet of Jesus, saying, "To what purpose is this waste?" He would have preferred that the three hundred pence should be given to him, that he might appropriate them to himself. The devil points out to him a way in which he can obtain an equal amount. He cannot resist the temptation. He goes to the chief priests—it is his own deliberate act—and bargains with them to betray Jesus. We scarcely know which to blame most, Judas or the chief priests. They who ought to have been the teachers of the people, leading them in the paths of holiness; they who by their words and example ought to have discountenanced all that was wrong, bargain for the betrayal of the innocent. How awful is the wickedness of the human heart! Oh, how we should beware of yielding to the first motions of sin! Do we ever betray our Master? Doubtless we would reply with some warmth, Never. Let us not be too sure; before we answer so confidently let us look within. Every sin we willingly commit is a betrayal of Christ; "we crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh." One single sinful habit indulged in may lead us on to treason against our Master similar to that of Judas. If we deny the truth by our words or by our life we are betraying Christ. Oh, how earnestly should we pray never to betray our Lord, or prove ourselves traitors by opening the gates of the strongholds of His Kingdom for the enemy to gain an entrance!

EVENING.

AND He went forward a little, and fell on the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; take away this cup from Me: nevertheless not what I will, but what Thou wilt. And He cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour? Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.—St. Mark xiv. 35—38.

THE Redeemer's soul was "exceeding sorrowful" for many reasons. He knew the sufferings He should have to endure, and His human flesh shrank from them. He knew the pains and perils His followers would be compelled to pass through before they could found His Kingdom on earth. He knew that though He should bear the sins of the whole world, yet the perverseness and disobedience of many would render void for them the Death and Passion of their Saviour. How earnestly He prays that if it were possible the cup, the bitter cup, might pass from Him! It is as man He prays. His humanity shrinks from suffering, but His Will is always one with the Will of the Father. The Saviour's prayer should teach us never to ask for anything that is not in accordance with the Will of God. The very attitude of His body shows His earnestness. "He fell on the ground;" He kneels in all humility, showing here as everywhere an example. Can they be in earnest who sit carelessly in their seats while the prayers of the Church are being offered up? If they were in earnest they would kneel humbly on their knees whilst they prayed with their hearts and lips. When He had prayed He comes to His disciples, doubtless seeking the sympathy His soul longed for; but He "findeth them sleeping." How gentle His rebuke! Even when rebuking He makes excuse for them, and gives a word of encouragement to rouse them to more enduring watchfulness. Do we feel inclined to sleep when we ought to watch and pray? Let the thought of our Saviour's sufferings excite us to watchfulness, and His example lead us on to more earnestness, reverence, and zeal in prayer.

AND the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put Him to death; and found none. And there arose certain, and bare false witness against Him, saying, We heard Him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands. But neither so did their witness agree together. And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest Thou nothing? what is it which these witness against Thee? But He held His peace, and answered nothing.—St. Mark xiv. 55, 57—61.

THE chief priests and council use all their craft and cunning to prove the innocent guilty. They wish to put Jesus to death, but they fear the people. They must therefore prove Him guilty that His death may have the appearance of a just judgment. How perfect was the sinlessness of Christ! Witnesses against Him are sought on every side, but none are found. Even those who did witness against Him proved their own falseness by not agreeing together. We should ever keep before us the sinlessness of Christ. We should aim at being like Him. When the high priest stood up and questioned Jesus, He held His peace. The high priest marvelled; but why marvel? Why should Jesus answer when no accusation could be brought against Him, and when the false witnesses proved that they were unreliable by disagreeing in their testimony? When the high priest asked Him a direct question, then He answered. "Art Thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" The high priest thought He was setting a trap for Christ; he deemed it impossible that He could escape. The Lord read his thoughts. Hear the simple straightforward answer; "Art thou the Christ?" Jesus said, "I am." We should learn from the example of Christ to confess Him at all times. Even when our confession may cause us present inconvenience or suffering let us not hesitate. If we confess Christ before men He will confess us before His Father when He comes a second time, and we shall see Him sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.

Thursday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council, and bound Jesus, and carried Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. And Pilate asked Him, Art Thou the King of the Jews? And He answering said unto him, Thou sayest it. And the chief priests accused Him of many things: but He answered nothing.—St. Mark xv. 1—3.

THE Christ was tried before the high priest and though innocent was declared guilty. He now stands before Pilate. Almost before the morning broke, so great was their haste, the council delivered Jesus to Pilate. Naturally Pilate asks what accusation is brought against the prisoner, but no definite crime can be laid to His charge. All they can say is, "If he were not a malefactor we would not have delivered Him up unto thee." To what evil means they stooped to accomplish their wicked purpose! Do we never stoop to evil means to accomplish our end? Are we perfectly innocent in this matter? When we are tempted to do so, let us remember our own judgment which we pass on these chief priests and scribes. We condemn them unconditionally. We should be equally ready to condemn ourselves if we yield to a like temptation. From how many evil actions, from how many unlawful deeds should we be saved, if we could see our own actions in the same light that we see the actions of others! Well for us if we could judge ourselves with a righteous judgment. Pilate then questions Jesus. To him Christ replies by a simple affirmative; He acknowledges that He is the King of the Jews. He remains silent when vehemently accused of the chief priests. He will not return railing for railing. He speaks to those with whom He thinks His words will have some weight; He is silent when He knows He cannot convince. Are our minds open to conviction? Jesus Christ speaks to us. Are we searching for the truth? Jesus Christ is the truth. Are we anxious to know and obey our King? Jesus Christ reveals Himself to all who open up their hearts to receive Him.

Friday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND they bring Him unto the place Golgotha, which is, being interpreted, The place of a skull. And they gave Him to drink wine mingled with myrrh: but He received it not. And when they had crucified Him, they parted His garments, casting lots upon them, what every man should take. And it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the superscription of His accusation was written over, THE KING OF THE JEWS. And with Him they crucify two thieves; the one on His right hand, and the other on His left.—St. Mark xv. 22—27.

THIS is a passage we ought to feel, and not lightly comment on. We should try to realise the scene in our imaginations. We should picture Calvary, the three crosses, the Saviour crucified between two thieves, the railing multitude wagging their heads and mocking. Oh, how infinite is the condescension of the Son of God! The just bearing the iniquity of the unjust. The righteous Saviour dying for the unrighteous that He might bring them to God. As we think of His love and thus try to realise the scene, do we not feel stirred within to resolve never more to sin wilfully, lest we crucify the Son of God afresh? Shall we not renew our strength to bear more patiently our cross, knowing that however heavy it may appear to us it is light in comparison of the Redeemer's Cross. Willingly, then, and obediently let us take up the cross that Christ lays upon us. It may be heavy, but if so He will give us strength to carry it. Are our bodies racked with pain? Christ suffered without a murmur. Have we to endure calumnies? Christ did not resent the injuries He had to endure. Have we to suffer for the sins of others? Christ bore the sins of the whole world. With deepest love and adoration let us devote ourselves to the service of our loving, adorable Redeemer. Let us ask Him for the spirit of recollectedness that we may never forget His tender love for us, that we may be filled with contrition for our past sins, and with a determination henceforth to live only unto Him Who for our sakes didst pour out His blood upon the Cross.

Saturday after the Sixteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name JESUS.—St. Luke i. 26—31.

GOD chose Mary to be the blessed Virgin Mother of Him Who was to be called the "Son of the Highest." He chose her because He knew she would yield a perfect obedience and co-operate with His will in all the actions of her life. She was, and confesses herself to be, "the handmaid of the Lord," ready and willing to do and suffer all that He willed. "Highly favoured" indeed was she, yea, "blessed among women." Our Lord says that all who do the Will of His Father may be spiritually in as close relationship to Him as a mother, a sister, or a brother. Do we desire to be thus honoured? Do we desire to be brethren and sisters of our blessed Lord? Do we desire to be fellow-heirs with Him of the kingdom? Our Lord tells us the way. "Do the Will of My Father." Yield a perfect obedience to that Will. Whatever He calls us to do and suffer, that we should do and suffer, saying, in the Virgin Mother's language, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." We have been born again of the Spirit, let us yield ourselves more entirely to His guidance. We are children of God, let us yield implicit obedience to the commands of our Father. Whatever be the message He sends us, let us hear and comply. When He points out the way in which we can serve Him and benefit the Church or world, whether it be by active service or patient suffering, let us yield ourselves His willing instruments for Christ's sake.

The Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.

I THEREFORE, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all.—Ephesians iv. 1—6.

IF Christianity consisted in communion with Christ, and walking before Him and worshipping Him, it would not be so difficult. But because it also includes communion with our fellow-men, this makes it difficult. The Saviour is holy; but His followers are unholy. The Saviour is meek and lowly and forgiving; but His followers are quick to anger, unforgiving, and full of pride. Therefore communion with one another is not easy. If we desire to be one body indeed, we must advance to this state of perfection step by step. This requires work and patience, each member growing gradually into the likeness of Christ. But however difficult it may be to arrive at perfection in communion one with another, it is our duty to aim at it. We are called not to live alone with the Lord, but to form a holy community one with another. To this end we must be lowly and meek, forbearing one another in love. It will help us much if we remember that we are all members of one great family. It is sad to see members of a family living apart, estranged from one another. A little more forbearance, a little more longsuffering, and many a family quarrel might be healed. The same is needed by the Church of Christ. So long as we are members of Christ, we are members one of another. Let us walk worthy of our vocation; and, having been baptized into one body, let us endeavour "to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." To this end let us pray that God's grace may always prevent and follow us, that so we may continually be given to all good works, for our dear Lord's sake.

BLESSED be the Lord God of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people, and hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David; as He spake by the mouth of His holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath which He sware to our father Abraham, that He would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life. And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways.—St. Luke i. 68—76.

ZACHARIAS in his prophecy first blesses and praises God for what He has already done and will continue to do for His people, and then, addressing his unconscious infant, foretells the part he is destined to take in working out the promised salvation. He sees in the fulfilment of one promise of God the complete fulfilment of all His promises. The Christ had not yet come into the world; but with the eye of faith Zacharias looks on into the future and sees how He should be "made flesh, and should dwell among us;" how He should "visit and redeem" His people. Jesus Christ should conquer man's foe; and man, being delivered out of the hand of his enemies, should henceforth be enabled "to serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness." St. John Baptist should be the instrument by which the way for all this mercy and salvation should be prepared. The way has been prepared. God, in Christ, has visited and redeemed us. We have been delivered out of the hands of our enemies. God has done His part: are we doing ours? Are we serving Him each day of our life? Do we live a life of holiness and righteousness? Are we ready to sacrifice self for God? and are we filled with love and charity towards our neighbours? Does our obedience spring from inward purity and love?

WE know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness. And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, even in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.—1 St. John v. 18—20.

JESUS CHRIST "visited and redeemed His people" in order to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. So long as they were in the hands of their enemies they were the slaves of sin; they "set up idols in their hearts" and worshipped them. They lived in the pursuit of vain pleasures. The enemy had complete power over them. Jesus Christ was manifested to destroy his power. He established His Church as a stronghold against Satan. Satan can never prevail against it. The world without "lieth in wickedness." Satan has still power over them. We who are within the fold are safe from the wicked one. He cannot touch us so long as we abide in the fold and continue "in Him that is true." The Son of God came to undo Satan's work. He came to make us children of God. He came to give us understanding, that we might know Him that is true. We know that we dwell in Him and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit. All this the Son of God has done for us. Are we working with Him? Are we purifying our hearts and keeping ourselves unspotted from the world? Are we serving one Master, rejecting altogether the claims of any other? Do we keep ourselves from idols? We are the sons of God, we are born of God; we should not suffer anything to draw us away from our allegiance. Our duty is to live as sons of God, and aim at being holy because God is holy; "for whosoever is born of God sinneth not." If we would be like Him hereafter we must aim to be like Him here. God will give us strength to become what we desire to be, if we cast away every idol and trust in Him alone.

Wednesday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

LORD, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; a light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel.—St. Luke ii. 29—32.

IT was revealed to Simeon that he should not die till he saw the Lord's Christ. Ancient prophecy led him to expect the temple to be the scene of the Lord's Advent. There he waited for Him; and God rewards his patient waiting. When Jesus is brought into the temple he takes Him in his arms, and bursts forth into a hymn of thanksgiving and humble submission. How touchingly beautiful is the Song of the aged Simeon! He had long been "waiting for the consolation of Israel." He had evidently made it a subject of prayer that he might not die till his eyes had beheld the "desire of all nations." His prayer was answered. It was specially revealed to him that he should see "the Lord's Christ." When he beholds the infant Jesus brought into the temple, the Spirit shows him that at last the longing of his soul is accomplished. What a blessed moment for the aged saint when he takes the Child Jesus in his arms, and pours forth his soul in thanksgiving to his God! It was in the temple that his prayer was answered. Do we wait for Christ in His holy house of prayer? Do we earnestly pray that our hearts may be fit to receive Him? As we pray, do we wait for an answer? When we receive what we ask, do we render hearty thanks to God, and praise Him for His goodness? Simeon felt that his time of departure was at hand. It was a peaceful departure. God was "letting him depart in peace." He knew now that all must be well, as the Saviour was come to be "a light to lighten the Gentiles," and "the glory of Israel." Jew as well as Gentile should profit by His Advent. "Fitly do we Gentiles use this holy song in our public worship as a hymn of thanksgiving for that salvation of which we have read in the second evening lesson, and the knowledge of which ought to make us ready to depart in peace whenever God shall call."

Thursday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then? He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise. Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do? And he said unto them, Exact no more than that which is appointed you. And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages.—St. Luke iii. 10—14.

THE mission of St. John Baptist was to prepare the way for Christ. He fulfilled his mission in various ways. He pointed his disciples to Jesus; he told them of the Lamb of God. He baptized with the baptism of repentance. He exhorted the people to repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand. This evening we have a specimen of his preaching and teaching. The people, the publicans, the soldiers all ask, "What shall we do?" They wish to give proofs of the sincerity of their repentance. They had come out of curiosity, or perhaps to mock; they remained to pray and to learn their duty from the mouth of him who had so sternly rebuked them at the beginning. St. John deals with each class in turn. He lays his hand on the very sin each must have felt was most common to his trade or profession, and said, if you would be fit to receive the Christ when He comes, rid yourself of this sin. Thus early in his course did he fulfil the prophecy of the angel. He "turned many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God;" many of the "disobedient to the wisdom of the just." Their repentance was sincere and lasting. Nearly two years after this those who had received the baptism of John "justified God;" that is, they acknowledged God's justice and love in sending the Baptist to prepare the way of the coming Christ. If the Baptist were present now, would he not have to rebuke us? Would he not be compelled to say, if you would be Christ's, rid yourselves of sin? Oh, let us purify our hearts, that Christ may enter and dwell within us!

Friday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

AND Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days He did eat nothing: and when they were ended, He afterward hungered. And the devil said unto Him, If Thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.—St. Luke iv. 1—4.

JESUS CHRIST was tempted, to encourage us to endure when tempted. We cannot escape temptation. It is no sin to be tempted. The Son of God Himself was tempted. When we yield to temptation it is sin. The Christ yielded not when tempted. He was without sin. If Satan dared to tempt Jesus he will be sure to tempt us. Let us learn from this to be watchful. Let us learn also from Christ's example how we should meet temptation. If we resist as He resisted we shall be sure to conquer. If we have at any time yielded to temptation, let us take warning and see how we were overcome. Sometimes Satan tries to tempt us by means of our natural appetites. He knows well our various inclinations. Though the inclinations may be innocent in themselves, he turns them into occasions for temptation. We cannot be too watchful. If we are of a cheerful disposition let us beware of wantonness; if sad, let us beware of gloom and despair; if we are poor and desire a competence, the tempter suggests unlawful means to enrich ourselves. He has temptations to suit every age and every station in life. But, thank God, there is no necessity to yield. We have the same weapon with which our Lord hurled back Satan's temptations. When we are tempted let us say, "It is written." If we feel Satan's power strong, if we feel his grasp and are almost on the point of yielding, recall the word by which the Saviour vanquished the enemy, "Get thee behind me, Satan." As he fled from Christ, so will he flee from us. We may be wounded, breathless; but we shall arise completely victorious through the power of Christ and His Word.

Saturday after the Seventeenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up: and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor.—St. Luke iv. 16—18.

CHRIST is our example in all things. We here learn from Him to be diligent in our attendance at the house of God, and to labour for the salvation of others. He went into the synagogue, "as His custom was." It was His custom to attend in the courts of the Lord's house regularly. Do we attend regularly and conscientiously all the services in the parish church? Worship and praise are God's right. Do we render them to Him as we ought? If we absent ourselves from the house of God without a cause, and refuse to render to Him the public worship and praise which He demands, we sin against Him; we refuse to render to Him the homage due unto His Name. Let it be our earnest prayer and aim to follow our Master's example, and to worship God as He wills in His holy house, which is our house of prayer. We should also labour for the salvation of others. In doing so, we should not be respecters of persons, willing to do much for one class of people but very little for another. When Christ taught in the temple or synagogue He was surrounded by men of all ages, ranks, and conditions. He spoke gracious words to them all. But He was just as ready to speak gracious words to the Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob. Be it our aim to have an equal love and charity for all, an equal desire for the salvation of all. So far as it is in our power let us heal the brokenhearted, help those who are slaves to sin to free themselves from their captivity, and do what we can to ensure that the Gospel is preached to the poor. In so acting we shall be following the example of Christ in worshipping God and advancing His Kingdom.

The Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.

I THANK my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.—1 Corinthians i. 4—8.

THE apostle had many causes for being dissatisfied with the Corinthians. In this Epistle we find him denouncing in severe terms their pride, their party-spirit, their sensuality, their wantonness and uncharitableness. Yet he "thanks God always on their behalf." He looks beyond the surface. The Word of God dwells in their midst; they have been gifted with many spiritual gifts; they wait for the coming of the Lord: therefore he can hope that the Lord will finish the good work begun in them, and "confirm them unto the end, that they might be blameless in that day." What valuable lessons, and lessons full of comfort, the apostle teaches us here! We who are members of the Church of Christ cannot help grieving over the sins and shortcomings of many of our fellow-members. We see them sinning against the light, abusing their privileges, blaspheming instead of glorifying the Name of Christ. So far gone do they seem in sin that we begin to despair, and cease to hope or even pray. St. Paul teaches us to do otherwise. We may mourn over the wilfulness of the sinner, we may grieve to see him encouraging himself and others in iniquity; but we must never cease to hope and pray. We must pray that the Word of God may have free course in them and be glorified, and hope that even the most hardened sinner will still repent. Let us lift up our eyes and hearts to Him from Whom cometh our help, and never doubt His power and willingness to help all who pray earnestly to Him in His dear Son's Name. Let us ask Him to give grace to the tempted to enable them to withstand their temptations, and to ourselves pure hearts and minds to follow Him our only God, through Jesus Christ.

Monday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND it came to pass, when He was in a certain city, behold a man full of leprosy: who seeing Jesus fell on his face, and besought Him, saying, Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean. And He put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, I will: be thou clean. And immediately the leprosy departed from him. And He charged him to tell no man: but go, shew thyself to the priest, and offer for thy cleansing, according as Moses commanded.—St. Luke v. 12—14.

LEPROSY was considered to be incurable save by the power of God. When Naaman came to the king of Israel with a letter from the king of Syria, asking him to recover him of his leprosy, he answers, "Am I God, to kill and make alive?" This man full of leprosy displays a wondrous faith. He heard Christ; he saw His miracles; he believed He had divine power. In lowly submission he threw himself at Jesus' feet, saying, "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." He never doubted His power: he doubted only whether He had the will. He throws himself on His mercy. Lord, Thou hast the power; I pray Thee also have the will. His was a beautiful form of prayer. It sprang from faith, was uttered in deep humility, claimed nothing; but left all to the will of Him Whom he was convinced was all-wise and all-merciful. When we have prayed we would do well to look back in thought on the prayer we have just offered up, and see whether in any respect it is like the prayer of the poor leper. When we pray do we heartily desire an answer, but at the same time leave all in the hands of God, ready to accept what He wills? Do we pray in faith and with humility? As we make the request do we feel that He has the power to grant it? He alone can cleanse us from sin. Sin is like leprosy, incurable save by God. We have been cleansed by Him in the bath of regeneration, but we need daily cleansing from our daily infirmities. Let us come daily to the Saviour, and in faith and humility ask Him to put forth His hand and give the renewing touch and speak the cleansing word.

Tuesday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND they said unto Him, Why do the disciples of John fast often, and make prayers, and likewise the disciples of the Pharisees; but Thine eat and drink? And He said unto them, Can ye make the children of the bridechamber fast, while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days.—St. Luke v. 33—35.

OUR Lord does not enjoin fasting on His disciples. When speaking on the subject in the Sermon on the Mount He takes it for granted that men do fast, and gives directions how they should fast that they might receive a blessing from God and not praise from men. His own disciples during the time He was with them fasted not. In the brightness of His presence it would have been out of place to fast. When He should be taken from them, "then shall they fast in those days." Christ discouraged the formal observance of fasting—fasting merely to gain the praise of men. Such fasting was worthless in His sight, just as long prayers offered up at the corner of streets to be seen of men were worthless. He encourages His followers to live in a spirit of prayer; to be ready at all times to lift up their hearts to God; and He encourages them also to be always and on all occasions "temperate in all things." This, however, should not prevent them observing stated times of prayer, and stated times of fasting as the Church enjoins. The Bible and the Church teach the duty. We should remember the purpose of fasting. It is to bring the body under control of the spirit, and so to gain the victory over sin. It is vain to fast from food if we do not abstain from sin. It is vain to pray against a besetting sin and then to rise from our knees and deliberately commit the sin we have prayed against. All the various means of grace are meant to perfect us in holiness. When we make use of them we should remember this. If we do not become holier by their use, so far as we are concerned they fail of their purpose.

Wednesday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND it came to pass in those days, that He went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called unto Him His disciples: and of them He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.—St. Luke vi. 12, 13.

BEFORE calling His disciples and choosing out of them the twelve, our Lord spent a whole night in prayer to God. Do we follow His example when about to begin some great undertaking? If we are His disciples we shall try to learn from His example. Every action in the life of Christ is an example to us. How is it with us in this matter of prayer? Christ gave up long hours to intercourse with God. How much time do we give? At special times and on special occasions do we feel drawn towards God? Do we feel pleasure in devoting extra time to communion with Him? Do we pray for the desire to pray? The desire to pray is an answer to prayer. When we rise from prayer do we wait for an answer? When the answer is vouchsafed do we make use of the grace given? Do we go forth with renewed strength to do the duty which lies nearest to us? See our blessed Lord as He rises from prayer addressing Himself to the work which doubtless He had been making a subject of prayer. He called unto Him His disciples; those who were learning from Him deep and heavenly truths. Out of these He chose twelve, whom He named apostles, that is, men sent forth to teach. They were to be the first missionaries of His Church, and at the same time foundations upon which that Church was to be built. Christ sends them forth even as He was sent, for the salvation of souls. He willed that they should labour even as He did, even to bonds and to death. How great is the honour of labouring with Christ to win souls! They who are duly called to this work should esteem it the highest honour, and not spare themselves in the service; we who benefit by their labours should pray for them and esteem and honour them for their office sake.

Thursday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

REJOICE ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets. But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.—St. Luke vi. 23—26.

WE may have much of this world's goods, and still be unblessed. On the other hand, we may have but few of the good things of this life and yet be thrice blessed. Our true blessedness does not consist in the abundance of this world's riches and pleasures. It depends on what we are; not on what we have. Are we poor in spirit? do we yield ourselves in absolute submission to the Will of God? Then are we blessed. Do we hunger and thirst after righteousness, earnestly longing for the deeper needs of our souls to be filled? Then are we blessed. When some heavy cross is laid upon us and we suffer for the Son of man's sake, if we bear it patiently and bow ourselves to the Will of our heavenly Father; then are we blessed. But they who let their riches and their "fulness of bread" be a hindrance in seeking the Kingdom have "received their consolation" in this life, and cannot expect to receive it in another. Christ rebukes here also excessive laughter, that is, the laughter excited by the pleasures, the wantonness, the vanities, the sins of this world. They who indulge in this sinful laughter and encourage others to do so shall "mourn and weep." They shall mourn because in sinful trifling they have thrown away opportunities which if used would cause them "to rejoice in that day, and leap for joy." If we will rejoice, let us rejoice in the Lord; not in sinful pleasure. Let us rejoice in the Lord because He is ours and we are His. If we continue His to the end, we shall receive the countless blessings He has prepared for those who love Him.

Friday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

NOW when He had ended all His sayings in the audience of the people, He entered into Capernaum. And a certain centurion's servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die. And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto Him the elders of the Jews, beseeching Him that He would come and heal his servant. And when they came to Jesus, they besought Him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom He should do this.—St. Luke vii. 1—4.

ONE of the uses of adversity is to make us fly to Christ. It is a blessing in disguise; a messenger of God to be received thankfully. This centurion's servant was sick. The servant was dear to Him. This in itself was a mark of a kindly and gentle disposition; for it was the habit for men in those days to treat with much harshness the slaves who were their absolute property. The sickness of this valued slave was a cause of deep grief to the centurion. In his adversity he is driven to look for help outside himself. He flies to Christ. His faith is strengthened; his belief is sufficiently strong to win a favourable answer to his prayer. The centurion cared for the life of his servant: do we care for the souls of those who are dear to us? The soul is far more precious than the body. The sickness of the soul is of far more importance, and more dangerous than that of the body. If we see those we love in danger of being led astray, do we fly to Christ for help? If we feel temptation's power ourselves, do we seek the Lord? If our adversity, of whatever kind it be, makes us fly to Christ, it is a blessing. Everything that draws us nearer to Him is a blessing. Everything that makes us feel our helplessness is a blessing. Let our sorrows lead us to know ourselves, to learn God's love, to long for His salvation, and to obey His Will. Oh, to have more faith in Christ in committing to His care the temporal and spiritual welfare of those dear to us! Oh, for more hope and love in praying and working for them! Lord, increase our faith; and may every season of adversity draw us nearer to Thee.

Saturday after the Eighteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND all the people that heard Him, and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him.—St. Luke vii. 29, 30.

THE people and the publicans justified God. Why? Because in a child-like spirit they accepted what God had done for them. They thanked Him for sending the Forerunner, and proved their gratitude by being baptized with the baptism of John. The Pharisees on the other hand reflected, and argued, and at last rejected the counsel of God. How blessed is a true child-like spirit! It is God's gift. We cannot produce it in ourselves. We should pray to God for it. He will not refuse to give it if we ask in faith. If we are possessed of a child-like spirit we shall yield a willing consent to fall in with and accept thankfully all that God ordains and provides. We shall not be always planning and arguing, bewildering ourselves with thoughts too deep for us to fathom. We shall lay aside self-opinion, and giving ourselves up to the teaching of the Spirit within, and of His Word and the appointed interpreter of that Word without, we shall be guided by God alone, and depend solely upon Him. A child-like spirit is obedient and docile: it knows it must not follow its own will. These publicans learned from St. John that it was God's Will that they should be baptized by him. They do not for a moment suffer their will to come into collision with God's Will. They acknowledge God's goodness and greatness by straightway submitting to the rite. If we desire to be God's loving children we shall renounce our own will for that of God, and submit ourselves to whatever His providence provides and demands. Nothing is so fatal to the spiritual life as self-confidence and pride of intellect. They lead, as in the case of the Pharisees and lawyers, to rejection of the counsel of God. Oh, that we had more of that child-like spirit that wills whatsoever God wills, that we might be His loving and obedient children!

The Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.

THIS I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind; having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who, being past feeling, have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But ye have not so learned Christ; if so be that ye have heard Him, and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.—Ephesians iv. 17—21.

ST. PAUL reminds the Ephesians again and again that they had been heathens. He thanks God that He brought them out of the darkness in which they were into the light. He warns them that they should no longer walk as heathens, in the vanity of their mind, but that they should walk worthily of the vocation wherewith they were called. As we read the apostle's words, do we look within and examine our hearts? What kind of examples are we to those around us? Do we so walk that the "heathen" among whom we dwell may learn from our daily life blessed truths about God's love, compassion, and holiness? Does our conduct reflect these attributes of God? Does the voice of our life (for every life has a voice) afford to the minds of professed unbelievers such thoughts of God as harmonise with the teaching of the Bible? Are we walking as children of light? Are we aiming to be holy, as God is holy? What sort of an influence do we bring to bear on our more immediate companions? Is it an influence for good or for evil? We should ever remember that we are new creatures, created in righteousness and true holiness; and that therefore we should love and serve God. We should also remember what we owe to our fellow Christians as being "members one of another." We should be "kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven us." Oh, that we were thus followers of God as dear children! Oh, that His Holy Spirit may in these, as in all other things, direct and rule our hearts, for Christ's sake!

Monday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

THEN came to Him His mother and His brethren, and could not come at Him for the press. And it was told Him by certain which said, Thy mother and Thy brethren stand without, desiring to see Thee. And He answered and said unto them, My mother and My brethren are these which hear the word of God, and do it.—St. Luke viii. 19—21.

GOD speaks to us through His Word. When we read the Bible we hear God's voice. How careful should we be how we hear and how we read! Through the Bible we learn the way in which God deals with men. We learn His wisdom and love. In learning this we profit by the Scriptures. If we neglect to learn the gift will be taken from us. This is the law of all God's gifts. If we make good use of them we shall profit by them; if we neglect them they will be taken from us. Our Lord gives us still further encouragement to study God's Word by saying that all who "hear the Word of God, and do it," are His mother and brethren. What higher blessing could He promise to the right use of the Word of God? Do we value the privilege of being Christ's brethren; related to Him by a spiritual relationship far more closely than we could be by any natural tie or relationship? If we do, then let us "hear the Word of God, and do it." Let us be in earnest both in hearing and doing, lest we fail in the knowledge which may fit us to remain the brethren of our Lord. God gives us all that is necessary. He bids us use what He gives. It is our own fault if we come short of what He desires us to be. God wills our sanctification. He wills that we should be without fault. He tells us His Will. He tells us how we may accomplish it. He promises still further graces and gifts as we make use of those we have, and so win the right to more. Oh, let us not be faithless or unbelieving! Let us value God's Word, use it, and keep and do all its requirements. Then we shall have more gifts granted to us, and we shall be blessed in being united in close bonds of relationship to our Saviour.

Tuesday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

A WOMAN having an issue of blood twelve years, came behind Him, and touched the border of His garment. And Jesus said, Somebody hath touched Me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of Me. When the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before Him, she declared unto Him before all the people for what cause she had touched Him, and how she was healed immediately. And He said unto her, Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole.—St. Luke viii. 43, 44, 46—48.

WE learn from the story of the healing of this poor trembling, shrinking woman that faith even when very imperfect wins a blessing. This woman's faith was imperfect because it was ignorant. She thought the mere touch of Christ's garment would heal as by magic, without the owner knowing whether the blessing had been conferred or not. How little she knew of Christ's character! Still, because she believed in His power, and had an earnest desire to be healed, her faith though ignorant is recognised; her disease is cured. Thank God, a weak imperfect faith is recognised now in our case as it was in hers. But we should pray that our faith may be increased and enlightened. Wilful ignorance is a sin. We pray God in the Litany to forgive us our ignorances as well as our other sins. It is our own fault if we remain in ignorance of the truth as it is in Jesus. We have a deep well to draw from. God provides us with the means by which we may draw forth the water of life. Let us use these means diligently, and never tire of drawing. We are all in many ways like this poor trembling woman. We are sick of a disease we cannot cure; no earthly physician can do us any good. Let us come in faith to the Good Physician. Even though our faith be weak He will recognise it, and by His recognition will strengthen it. Though it be imperfect it will win a blessing. In the act of blessing Christ will correct much of the imperfection. Let us not fear then. He will speak the word, "Thy sins be forgiven thee;" and, as He speaks, the sickness of our souls will be healed.

Wednesday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND He said to them all, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for My sake, the same shall save it. For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away? For whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed, when He shall come in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.—St. Luke ix. 23—26.

CHRIST never compels. He seeks, He draws; but He never forces. He sets before us in living, burning words the blessedness of yielding our wills to His, and following Him; and then leaves it to ourselves whether we will accept or reject the blessedness. "If any man will come after Me." If any man has the will, if he wishes, if he earnestly desires to "come after Me;" then "let him deny himself." Let him forsake all that hinders union with Christ, all evil thoughts, all works of darkness, and follow whithersoever Christ leads. This is the very beginning of our Christian course. The first step we must take is to renounce all that is contrary to the Will of God. Then we must follow Christ. This will necessitate our taking up the cross; that is, we must bear with patience the sorrows, the trials, the adversities which our heavenly Father sees fit to lay upon us. We must take it up humbly, sensibly, continually. If we take it up of our own free will, then we are following Christ. He of His own Will laid down His life. He willingly submitted to His Cross. We must take up ours with an equally ready will. Christ asks us to follow Him. He goes before; He leads the way: we are to follow. How long? He does not say. Whither? He does not say. Is the road rough, or smooth? He does not say. One thing we do know, He leads on to glory. If we are not ashamed of Him or His words, if we are not ashamed of His Cross, He will not be ashamed of us when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

WHILE they wondered every one at all things which Jesus did, He said unto His disciples, Let these sayings sink down into your ears: for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men. But they understood not this saying, and it was hid from them, that they perceived it not: and they feared to ask Him of that saying.—St. Luke ix. 43—45.

MEDITATION is profitable for all; it is a necessity for those who seek for a closer walk with God, and desire to deepen the spiritual life within them. St. Paul urges Timothy to meditate on the deep things of God's law; and our Lord often inculcates this duty upon His disciples. They were not merely to hear His sayings; they were to let them "sink down into their ears." We are not to be forgetful hearers, we are to ponder what we hear; we are to let it sink deep into our hearts, and bring forth fruit in our lives. By "these sayings" our Lord meant the predictions of His own sufferings, and also the instructions He had been giving them. But the advice about meditation is as necessary for us as for the disciples. We see how Jesus Christ Himself spent long hours in meditation and communion with His Father. Well for us if we imitated His example. How many things there are worthy of being thought over! How many of Christ's sayings to be considered! We have matter enough for meditation if only we would open our ears to hear, and our hearts to understand. We should meditate on the importance of our salvation. How much depends upon our own efforts! Of what vast importance this subject will appear when we are on our death-beds! At that time we shall grieve because we did not during life think more of the means and ways of salvation. If we let the sayings of Christ sink down into our ears, we shall find that a spirit of thoughtfulness and watchfulness will be the result, which will greatly help us in our upward and onward course. Let us then be diligent and constant in meditating on Christ's sayings. Let them sink into our ears and produce fruit in our lives.

Friday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because His face was as though He would go to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? But He turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.—St. Luke ix. 51—56.

THE Gospel law is a law of love. Acts of vengeance, such as James and John proposed, were permissible in retribution of sin under the old law. The spirit of the old law suffered these as the natural expression of hostility to evil. Under the Gospel they are wholly out of place. The spirit of the new covenant of grace is one of charity and resignation, the returning of good for evil, the bearing all things and the enduring all things. Instead of calling down fire from heaven on our enemies we are to love them. We should remember that they are our brethren. God is their Father as well as ours. They are created for the same end as ourselves. They have been redeemed and ransomed by the same precious Blood. They are being sanctified by the same blessed Spirit. The Son of man came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them. If we entertain ill feelings towards men, if we would revenge ourselves on them, are we not acting contrary to the spirit of the Christian dispensation and the example of Christ? Instead of injuring our enemies we should try to save them. Save them by our prayers and kindly deeds; save them by showing them an example of charity and resignation. Christ dealt gently and patiently with the erring and ignorant. If we would be Christ-like we must do so likewise.

Saturday after the Nineteenth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy Name. He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven. Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.—St. Luke x. 17—20.

HOW anxiously does our Lord provide for the salvation of souls! He not only sends forth His apostles, but "appointed other seventy also," whom He willed should work with Him. Oh, how blessed to work in union with the Son of God in saving souls! Christ expects everyone to take his share in this work. No one need stand idle. In His vineyard there is work enough for all. If we are not working we are hindering the work. We must be either gathering or scattering. The seventy return with joy from their missionary tour. Their rejoicing had a selfish tinge in it: they thought more of the power which had been given them over devils, and which they could exercise before admiring crowds, than the commission which had been given them, or the promise of their own salvation which had been vouchsafed to them. Our Lord gently rebukes them for this. We must not boast of our gifts: we must not glory in them. They are given to us for a purpose, —even the glory of God, and the welfare of our fellow-men. Let us use them diligently, but without boasting. Oh, how blessed the privilege of all those who live for God and work for Him! How great their reward; their names "are written in heaven." What are all the tears and trials of this life, what are all the losses and labours of this world, in presence of such words, such promises as these? Our names written in heaven! Heirs, inheritors of those bright and holy kingdoms which are the possessions of Christ, the "Ancient of Days," and of His saints! Oh, what good reason we have for rejoicing! How thankful we ought to be for our glorious hope!

The Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.

SEE then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the Will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; speaking to yourselves in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs; singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ; submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.—Ephesians v. 15–21.

THE apostle enjoins not only correct doctrine, but also correct walking. True Christianity is practical. It is practical in its use of time which flies so fast, and once flown can never be recalled. It is practical in its efforts to know the Will of the Lord; if we do not understand this we act "as fools," not as wise men. It is practical in its directions as to the use and abuse of those things which God has created for man. The spirit of wine must not rule the Christian; it is not in such a spirit he should speak and converse. The Holy Spirit must rule him, guiding his thoughts and words. His heart must be full of holy thoughts. Out of the abundance of the heart thus filled with holy thoughts the mouth will speak in "psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs." Well for us if we follow out these injunctions of the apostle. We shall not only be doing the right ourselves, but also we shall be helping to build up our brethren in our most holy faith. If we walk circumspectly in all things, then are we lights shining in the midst of the darkness. We use our opportunities and redeem the time for the Kingdom of God. But alas, how often we hide our Christianity in unchristian conversation and worldly conduct! In doing so we hinder the advance of the Gospel; and we shall have to give an account for time misspent and talents misused. Oh, let us see to it in time; let us "walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise!"

Monday after the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.
Evening.

WHICH of you shall have a friend, and shall go unto him at midnight, and say unto him, Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine in his journey is come to me, and I have nothing to set before him! And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give thee. I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth.—St. Luke xi. 5—8.

BY this short parable our Lord teaches the value of perseverance in prayer. There are times when it appears as though God did not hear us. We pray, and pray earnestly; but our prayers remain apparently unheard and unanswered. This is very trying to our faith, and courage, and patience. Men are tempted to cease praying when day after day their prayers remain unanswered. Doubts enter their minds that it is all in vain. Heart and will begin to faint. To correct this tendency, to help men to overcome this temptation, to teach men not to faint but to continue praying, is the object of this parable. God promises to hear the prayers of those who persevere. Let us take courage from this and similar promises of the Almighty. If we pray aright and in accordance with God's Will, and if we persevere in prayer, in due season God will answer and grant us the desires of our hearts. The seeming deafness of God to our prayers is for our good. It urges us on to renewed efforts. These efforts will increase our power to persevere. This will help our growth in grace. It will both prove and strengthen our faith. Then, because of our importunity, our heavenly Father will rise and give us what we need. If an earthly father, whose love is so imperfect and wavering, knows to "give good gifts to his children; how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him?" Let us then ask, let us ask in faith, let us ask perseveringly; we shall be sure to receive.

Tuesday after the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

AND when the people were gathered thick together, He began to say, This is an evil generation: they seek a sign; and there shall no sign be given it, but the sign of Jonas the prophet. For as Jonas was a sign unto the Ninevites, so shall also the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with the men of this generation, and condemn them: for she came from the utmost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.—St. Luke xi. 29—31.

THE history of the prophet Jonah was a sign and a warning to the evil generation who lived in the time of Christ. His deliverance from the living sepulchre in which he had been buried for three days was a type of the deliverance of Jesus from the tomb and His resurrection from the dead. Again, his history was a warning to the Jews. The men of Nineveh repented at the preaching of Jonah; but the Jews refused to accept the witness of a greater than Jonah. In like manner the Queen of Sheba would rise up in judgment against them. She came from her far distant country to hear the wisdom of Solomon; but the Jews turned a deaf ear to the instructions of a Greater than Solomon, though He "cried aloud, uttering His voice in the streets." The Jews rejected the light and the truth. They refused to make use of the gifts God gave them. They were therefore cut off; devoted to the destruction which they courted. The Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba used the little light granted to them, and God blessed the use of the means to give them repentance and amendment of life. We have the words of the Saviour sounding in our ears. Well for us if we repent at the preaching of "a greater than Jonah." As we make use of one gift we shall find others added to us. But if we refuse to hear, if we reject the signs, and continue in sin unrepented of, against us also shall the Ninevites and the Queen of Sheba rise up in judgment in the great day of the Lord.

Wednesday after the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THE ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully: and he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee.—St. Luke xii. 16—20.

A BYSTANDER interrupts our Lord in the midst of a solemn discourse with the request that he would speak to his brother "that he divide the inheritance." Christ refuses to become a judge and divider in temporal matters, but takes advantage of the opportunity to teach a lesson on the evil of covetousness, and enforces His teaching by a parable. The rich man thought only of temporal things; he laid up treasure on earth, but laid up no treasure in heaven. This was his first error. His second was that he thought he could count on a long life in which to enjoy all the good things which he had laid up in store. He formed his plans as if all depended on himself. We do not hear a word in his soliloquy about God's Will. His heart is fixed on this world, and the "much goods laid up for many years:" so he says to his soul, "Take thine ease, eat, drink, be merry." He had left out a superior Power in his calculations. He Whom he had neglected says, "Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?" Our Lord speaks this parable as a warning to all. Let us look within and see if we are following in the footsteps of the "rich fool" in any of the serious errors which he made. Are we laying up treasures on earth, and neglecting to lay up treasures in heaven? Do we make our calculations each day without taking into consideration the Will of God? We provide for our bodies, but what provision are we making for our souls? These are important questions, questions which should receive satisfactory answers. The true well-being of our souls depends much upon them.

Thursday after the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

LET your loins be girded about, and your lights burning; and ye yourselves like unto men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding; that when he cometh and knocketh, they may open unto him immediately. Blessed are those servants, whom the lord when he cometh shall find watching.—St. Luke xii. 35—37.

DO we speak and act as men who wait for their Lord? Are our loins girded? Do we keep the body under, by temperance and sobriety? Do we keep it in a state of training that we sink not under the severe work of the race we have to run? Are our lamps burning brightly? Do they show a clear light of pure doctrine and of holy example? In a word, are we living as if we expected His immediate return? To ascertain this we must examine ourselves. The value of self-examination is now acknowledged. We have come to know that it is a necessary step in the progress of the soul's life. Do we make it our practice? Do we look within to see what are our most pressing wants? Do we meditate on the graces needful for our spiritual advancement? Do we reflect on what sins we are most tempted to commit, in order that we may cure them? Blessed, thrice blessed are we if when our Lord comes He shall find us so doing: He will "make us sit down to meat, and come forth and serve us." We may have a foretaste of this blessedness even now. He has promised to come and dwell in the meek and humble heart. He has promised to dwell in those who come to Holy Communion in lowly submissiveness to His Will. In that blessed Sacrament we have not only the means of grace, but also of receiving the Lord Himself, in Whom all graces dwell. Our "sinful bodies are made clean by His Body, and our souls washed through His most precious Blood." Our loins are girded, our powers for labour increased, renewed grace is given to keep our lamps burning; so that, at whatever time the Master knocks, we, His faithful, watching servants, shall not be found unprepared: we shall open to Him at once, for all within shall be ready.

Friday after the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

A CERTAIN man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none: cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: and if it bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down.—St. Luke xiii. 6—9.

THE Owner of the vineyard comes day by day into His vineyard seeking fruit. He stands before us as trees in His vineyard and demands fruit. What shall we answer? Have we any good fruit to present to Him? He has done much for, and given much to us. To whom much is given, from him is much demanded. Have we throughout this year produced anything that will last into eternity? Or have we shut out from ourselves the rays of heavenly sunshine by clouds of earthly thoughts and earthly desires? Have we allowed the ground of our hearts to become hardened, and the surface to become so matted with weeds that the dews of grace cannot penetrate? Consider the opportunities for good which have been bestowed upon us, the means of grace which our Church supplies, the suggestions of the Spirit within, the invitations of the Spirit from without. How have we used them? We have been gifted with many blessings; have we thanked God for them? We have been proved by sorrows and trials; have we been patient and humble, so as to win blessings out of them for our immortal souls? As we grow older, do we become better, holier, wiser unto salvation? Our heavenly High Priest is continually making intercession for us. But though we may be spared year after year, yet our summons will come at last. Oh, let us not put off our repentance! "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish." Though baptized and born again, still we have need of repentance for sins of daily infirmity. If we repent and bear fruit, then it will be well with us; if not, the mandate must go forth, "cut it down."

Saturday after the Twentieth Sunday after Trinity. Evening.

STRIVE to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.—St. Luke xiii. 24.

A BYSTANDER asked our Lord, doubtless out of idle curiosity, "Are there few that be saved?" Christ does not answer the question directly, for He sees it was asked in a wrong spirit. He does far better. He tells the man what he should do if he wished to be one of the saved. It was of little consequence for him to know whether few or many should be saved. It was of the utmost consequence to know whether he was "striving," and striving on the right road. "Strive," strain every nerve, as the athlete in the contest, as the runner in the race. A weak, languid desire is of no avail. "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." Seek not a way of your own; you may think it pleasanter; you may prefer a pathway where the hedge-rows are bright with flowers, and the green grass soft beneath your feet. This is the broad way: it leads to destruction. Strive at the narrow entrance of repentance, self-denial, self-sacrifice. This entrance may be difficult to find, therefore seek it diligently, seek it in time. It will be too late when "the Master has shut to the door." The way is hard to follow, it is steep, often very lonely; there are innumerable difficulties, and many temptations to turn aside. Strive on. Be not tempted by those pleasant-looking by-paths. They appear very beautiful to the eye. When one treads them he soon finds his feet wounded by the hidden thorns; their flowers fade, their sweet perfumes become deadly narcotics; they lead to destruction. Thus our Lord unfolds a valuable lesson to the curious enquirer, and through him to men of every age and every clime. Let us strive to enter in at the strait gate. Let us not make the fatal mistake to think that because we have the Church in our midst, and the Bible in our houses, and the Sacraments administered by duly ordained men, that therefore we are safe. Each must strive for himself. Each must enter at the strait gate, and walk in the narrow way.

The Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.

BE strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.—Ephesians vi. 10—13.

HE who wishes to follow Christ, and in all earnestness desires to break with the kingdom of darkness, soon finds out that he has to wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, and with the prince of this world who rules in its dark places. The prince of the power of the air wills not to lose any one of his subjects. He makes despairing efforts to keep his kingdom together. When he sees a subject of his trying to break loose from bondage, he brings all his powers to bear upon him, lest he may lose him from his grasp. How needful the advice to clothe ourselves with the whole armour of God, and to stand on our guard! We who have to guard our own souls, and they to whose care souls have been entrusted, must always watch and work. We must never be off our guard for one moment; we must never lay aside our armour. We must not trust either ourselves or our great enemy. We are weak, easily deceived, easily overcome. Our enemy is strong, subtle, and often victorious: one moment's neglect may lose for us all that we have won. Oh, how many souls are lost through carelessness, through want of proper precautions, through failure in watching! If we sleep at our post, if wearied we lay aside our weapons, a whole army of evil spirits arise from their ambush and surprise us, unprepared for their attack. "Stand therefore." Be ever clothed in the divine armour. Never suffer your sword to lie beyond your grasp. God provides the armour. We are without excuse. Not one piece fails. Both offensive and defensive armour is all there. Let us clothe ourselves in the one, and practise well the use of the other, and be ever on the watch.

Monday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THEN said He also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompence be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.—St. Luke xiv. 12—14.

IT would be perverting the meaning of our Lord's words to say that they forbid our entertaining "our friends, kinsmen, and rich neighbours." This we may do, and be blessed in the doing of it; but we are not to leave the other undone. We are to think of the poor, to feed them, and clothe them, and visit them in their affliction. There is an eternal recompence promised to such "entertainment." Blessed are they who win it. Our Lord saw the motive of the Pharisee's entertainment. He saw he had given it for mere ostentatious display. His words therefore convey a rebuke of the worldly spirit and pride of the Pharisee, and are a warning to all who lose no opportunity of exalting themselves. Pride enters into and soils the best of our works. At times it enters so subtilly that we ourselves do not perceive it till the mischief is done. We should examine our motives: examine them by the light which the Holy Spirit will give us when asked. When about to begin a work, let us ask ourselves what our motive is in doing it. Is our motive to gain the praise of men, and satisfy our ambition? If so, however excellent the work may be in itself, we shall not be "recompensed" for it "at the resurrection of the just." Let us be on our guard against pride. It is very powerful because very subtle. It varies its appearance with varying circumstances. The pride of the poor man is not the same as the pride of the rich. There is spiritual pride as well as worldly pride. But, under whatever form it may appear, it is dangerous to the soul's best interests, for "a high look and a proud heart is sin," and a "proud look" is "an abomination" unto the Lord.

Tuesday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

WHICH of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?—St. Luke xiv. 28—31.

BEFORE undertaking to be Christ's disciple we must count the cost. We must think well over the difficulty of the undertaking. The Christian has to build up a tower of holiness; the foundation indeed is already laid, but he must build thereon "gold, silver, precious stones," of faith, patience, perseverance, good works; adding stone upon stone, going on from grace to grace, from virtue to virtue. This is no easy work. Whence shall we obtain the means to build up our tower? The tower will be useless unless it reaches up to heaven. If we stop half way, words of mockery will ring in our ears. The Christian has a war to wage. The opposing army is strong. He should therefore consult as to what means, what forces he can command. He must have sufficient forces not only to begin but also to carry the war into the enemy's country and win a complete victory. How many do we see beginning well, and soon growing cold! Let us not be betrayed into carelessness by thinking too lightly of the task we have undertaken. We have to strive against a powerful enemy; we must study his methods of attack, consider his movements, mark well how and where he has already been successful in his attempts to surprise us. Let us prepare our weapons of war, and be ever on our guard. Then, having calculated our means, we shall be able not only to meet, but also to conquer the strong man armed, even though he come against us with twenty thousands of his agents. Having counted the cost, we shall be able to build successfully our tower of holiness till it reaches to the heavens.

Wednesday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.—St. Luke xv. 20—24.

OUR heavenly Father is "more ready to hear than we to pray." Before ever the younger son in the parable utters his prayer the father has compassion on him. Before he reached the old home, when he was still a long way off, the father saw him and ran to meet him. Thus does our heavenly Father deal with His children by adoption and grace. "Before they call I will answer, and while they are yet speaking I will hear." These are His own gracious words. In them He pledges Himself to hear and swiftly answer the prayers of His children. But not only is He "more ready to hear than we to pray," He also "gives us more than we desire or deserve." The utmost the returning prodigal desires or hopes for is a place among the hired servants, yet the father bestows upon him a welcome more than filial; he falls on his neck, kisses him, causes him to be clothed in the best robe, puts a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet, and makes his return the occasion of rejoicing and festivity. His reception was far beyond his desert. He deserved nothing but severest punishment. The single good point in his conduct was the determination to return and throw himself on his father's mercy and generosity. Thus our heavenly Father acts towards all repentant, returning sinners. He abundantly pardons. He gives them more than they ask or deserve. Why then should we fear to approach Him? However far we have wandered away from Him, He will restore us to a place among His sons and daughters, He will clothe us in robes of purity, and strengthen and refresh our souls with angels' food.

Thursday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

HE that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much. If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.—St. Luke xvi. 10—13.

WE are stewards of God's gifts. That which we have is not our own. God bestows few gifts on us at first; if we prove faithful in our use of them He grants us more. Worldly wealth, friends, health, strength, talents, are not our own; they are "another Man's," lent to us to be used in His service. They belong to God even while they are in our possession. If we are "faithful in that which is" God's, then we shall receive that which is "our own;" that is, the heavenly inheritance. If we would be faithful to God we must serve Him alone. It is He Who bestows the gifts; we should not use them in the service of His enemy. It is sad and humiliating to remember how faithless we have been to our trust. Let us consider how few additional talents we have gained with the talents which He has given us. How little has the fruit corresponded with all the care and culture bestowed upon us! Let us fear, lest being unfaithful in little things God will not commit to our trust greater things. We should be faithful in our very thoughts and intentions. In serving God have our motives been pure? Do we serve God to please ourselves, or to gain credit with our companions, or win admiration? We may measure our love for God by the good works we do and the intention with which they are done. Are we full of compassion? Do we help the poor? Do we visit the sick and afflicted? Are we careful not to offend others either by our words or deeds? Well for us if we are faithful in these little things; for being found faithful, we shall be made rulers over many things.

Friday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

TAKE heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you.—St. Luke xvii. 3—6.

OUR Lord in His discourses with His disciples often dwells on the blessedness of a forgiving spirit. Unless we forgive we shall not be forgiven. When a brother trespasses against us we must rebuke him, that is, gently and patiently "tell him his fault between thee and him alone." If he repent we must forgive, just as God forgives us when asked. If he trespasses against us an unlimited number of times we must forgive, if he humbles himself to say he repents. Then we shall be like our Father in heaven. He forgives again and again; fully and freely forgives when we humble ourselves to ask for forgiveness. The apostles felt that the command was indeed hard to obey; they therefore say to Jesus, "Increase our faith." What a wonderful power in the world is a true and earnest faith! No wealth, no treasure of earth is to be compared to it. It can accomplish works as difficult as the removing of mountains or the plucking up of trees. It can root out habits of sin, restore penitents, remove mountains of pride, and clothe men with an eternal glory equal to that of angels. But our faith must grow and increase. Just as the grain of mustard seed when sown is small but it grows into the wide-spreading shrub, so faith when exercised will grow in vigour and increase in intensity. It has the power of development in itself. If we desire that our faith should increase, let us exercise it. Faith that is never exercised languishes. Instead of increasing it decreases. But if we exercise it, it will grow, and the Lord will assist its growth by nourishing it and fostering it.

Saturday after the Twenty-first Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND when He was demanded of the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, The Kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.—St. Luke xvii. 20, 21.

THE Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Grace in which we have a part, is "in the midst of" us. Though a Kingdom, and ruled over by One Who was born a King, and acknowledged by friends and enemies, by the powers of heaven and hell to be a King, still it came "not with observation." Unobserved in its first foundations, it spread and increased no one could tell how. No earthly power assisted it. No worldly wisdom planned the method of its progress. It had no symbols of royalty, no worldly gifts or honours to bestow on its adherents; and yet it made steady progress, conquering nation after nation, and will conquer till the whole world confesses Christ as its King. The Kingdom of God is also "within us" in the individual soul. Here also its law is, "It cometh not with observation." The first entrance of the new life into the soul is the hidden, secret work of the regenerating Spirit. Then a "Kingdom" is set up within us. If we submit to the laws of this Kingdom it will subdue unto itself our whole spirit, soul, and body, and make us happy and blessed subjects of our glorious Head and King. If we try to set up another kingdom, and make Pleasure our king, as the generations of Noah and Lot did, and live only to eat and drink, to buy and sell, we shut ourselves out of the true Kingdom. The power of the Kingdom will make itself felt when Christ comes a second time in great glory. He will then arise to judgment, and destroy all His enemies. God forbid that we should be found then fighting against Him, and so shut ourselves out! Oh that we had more faith to trust our King, and to pray that His Kingdom might come with ever increasing power in the world and in our souls! We should then be comforted here, and hereafter translated into His everlasting Kingdom, to dwell near and with our King for ever.

The Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.

I THANK my God upon every remembrance of you (always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,) for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He Who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ; even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.—Philippians i. 3—7.

IN this Epistle there are many evidences that St. Paul regarded the "saints at Philippi" with much affection. He thanks God upon every remembrance of them. When he prays for them it is with joy. When he looks forward to their future it is with confidence "that He Who had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He had good cause for such thankfulness, such joy, such confidence. "From the first day" they had shown a "fellowship in the Gospel." And now that he was in "bonds" in Rome—a prisoner for the "confirmation of the Gospel"—they proved their sympathy by communicating with him, and ministering to his wants. Such kindness, such love towards their father in Christ did credit to them, and drew closer the bonds of union between them and the apostle. He saw in their active benevolence the token of hearts filled with love to God and love to man, and prays that they may "abound yet more and more in love and knowledge." Would that in every parish like bonds of sympathy existed between pastor and people! Would that every pastor prayed and worked unwearied ly for his people, and that the people left him not alone to toil, but would take their share in the work, and pray earnestly for him and for themselves! Then the pastor would be able to "thank God on every remembrance" of his people, and the people would be "filled with the fruits of righteousness." Lord Jesus, make, we beseech Thee, all pastors diligently to preach Thy Word, and the people obediently to follow the same; that we may receive the crown of everlasting glory, for Thy dear Name's sake.

Monday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THERE was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him?—St. Luke xviii. 2—7.

THROUGH the parable of the importunate widow our Lord teaches the necessity of perseverance in prayer. He knows little of prayer who kneels down and suffers his thoughts to wander, using the words of prayer but knowing nothing of the inward spirit. He knows little of prayer who utters his petition and perseveres for a little time, but soon grows weary because no answer is vouchsafed. If we would pray we must be in earnest, we must collect our thoughts, and ponder the matter and the manner of our prayer. Our souls must be animated by faith, and love, and fervour. We must persevere, and continue to watch for an answer even though it may be long withheld. The widow in the parable was not deterred from again and again addressing her prayer to the unjust judge. She continually came to him. She would not accept a refusal. Shall the unjust judge be moved by the persevering prayer of the widow, and the holy and just God refuse to hear our cry? "I tell you He will avenge His elect, and that speedily." He will hear if we pray aright. He will answer if we persevere and watch for an answer. But what do we know of real, earnest, devout, fervent prayer? How do we pray? Do we prepare our hearts to pray? Do we try to solemnise our minds before we kneel down? When on our knees do we try to realise God's Presence? Do we take a real delight in prayer? or does the time spent in prayer appear wearisome? Let us determine for the future to make prayer a more real thing; to give more time and attention to it; and to persevere till we know and feel that we are answered.

Tuesday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

AND it came to pass, that as He was come nigh unto Jericho, a certain blind man sat by the way side begging: and hearing the multitude pass by, he asked what it meant. And they told him, that Jesus of Nazareth passeth by. And he cried, saying, Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me. And they which went before rebuked him, that he should hold his peace: but he cried so much the more, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.—St. Luke xviii. 35—39.

WE have here another example of perseverance in prayer. As Jesus was entering Jericho, Bartimæus heard the noise of the crowd passing by. Having ascertained the cause, he cried, "Jesus, Thou Son of David, have mercy upon me." Jesus apparently heard him not, and the multitude "rebuked him." Though his prayer remains unanswered he does not lose faith or hope. Jesus passes on into Jericho, visits the house of Zacchæus, and yet the blind man's prayer remains unanswered. But he will not be silenced. He will not doubt that One so good will at length have compassion. As Jesus leaves the house of Zacchæus in His final departure from Jericho the blind man renews his prayer. Opposition only made him cry the more. The silence and apparent disregard of Jesus only made him the more earnest. His perseverance is rewarded. His Lord gives him even more than he desires. He asks for bodily healing, and receives it; but with it he receives salvation for his soul, and follows Jesus glorifying God. Do we thus persevere in prayer? When heaven is silent and no answer returned, do we continue to urge our request? When the thronging press of the world tries to silence us, do we only cry out the more, "Son of David, have mercy on us?" Such perseverance in prayer requires faith, patience, and courage. It cannot be attained without giving ourselves wholly to God. We must overcome all hindrances from within and without. We must so attune our hearts to prayer that at all times, whenever occasion serves, we may be ready to pray, and long for an answer with as much earnestness as blind Bartimæus longed for sight for his blinded eyes.

WEDNESDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—EVENING.

THEREFORE we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.—2 Corinthians v. 6, 9, 10.

THE Lord cometh. He cometh to judgment. He will set up His judgment seat, before which we must all appear. We must then answer for the things we have done while in the body. The same Saviour Who is willing and ready to save us now will then be our Judge. The same voice that now bids us "Come" will then pronounce the final sentence. That sentence will be "according to that we have done, whether it be good or bad." Do we think as we ought on these things? Do we suffer them to make the impression on our lives they were intended to? Are we even now resolving to seek God's grace more earnestly? It may be ours now if we will but seek it. If it be ours, it will enable us to do good works acceptable unto God. We may use it to conquer sin, to learn to pray, and to teach our "wandering feet to tread the heavenly road." While we may, let us seek God's grace "to inspire our souls with strength divine." As we make use of it, more grace will be given unto us. Christ has won this privilege for us. He, by willing sacrifice of Himself, won the right for us to draw nigh to God and ask for grace. He gives us the power to use it. He pleads that time may be given us in which to use it. What use are we making of our time and of God's grace? We know not when we shall be called. It cannot be very far distant. We know not when the Son of man shall appear for judgment. It must be soon, for He says, "Behold, I come quickly." When He comes we must stand before His judgment seat, to answer for the things done in the body. Do we hope for or do we fear His coming? If we hope for it, are we living as they should who love their Lord's appearing?

THURSDAY AFTER THE TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.—EVENING.

AND when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the Name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest.—St. Luke xix. 37, 38.

AS the Saviour rides slowly towards Jerusalem, the multitude break forth into shouts of triumphant joy, and praise God for "all the mighty works they had seen." Some of them had seen Him raise Lazarus from the dead; others had seen Him heal the impotent man; and Bartimæus, who had been blind but had light bestowed upon him, was among those who followed Jesus. These praised God for all the mighty works. The Pharisees were jealous of the honours paid to Christ. They bid Him rebuke His disciples. They cannot endure that He should be called King. They cannot understand the blessed truth which was hidden under the words of the multitude, "Peace in heaven." Heaven at peace with man; man reconciled to his God. "Master, rebuke Thy disciples" is the senseless expression of their jealousy and rage. Senseless indeed was the request. "If these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." They did hold their peace (or, rather, their shouts of joy were quickly changed into cries of "Crucify"), and the stones and rocks bore their testimony to the fact that Christ reigned in the Kingdom of Nature: the rocks were rent when their Creator was crucified. This multitude had some of the requisites of true devotion. They had the affection of heart which follows Christ, and the praise of the lips which confess Him. If our devotion is to be real we need both these, but we need also perseverance and careful watching, lest we be drawn away from our allegiance by the sinful praise or threatenings of wicked men. Well for us if our devotion be sincere and lasting, springing from an intelligent faith in and earnest love for Him Who has wrought so many mighty works for us and for all mankind.

Friday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THEN said the lord of the vineyard, What shall I do? I will send my beloved son: it may be they will reverence him when they see him. But when the husbandmen saw him, they reasoned among themselves, saying, This is the heir: come, let us kill him, that the inheritance may be our's. So they cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him.—St. Luke xx. 13—15.

AS we read the words, "They cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him," there rises before our imagination the whole scene of the crucifixion on Calvary. As the weeks fly by, and as Friday succeeds Friday, we do well to contemplate, on the day of the week upon which the crucifixion took place, Christ crucified; and to bring to our remembrance His sufferings, that they may draw us nearer to Him in love. "They cast Him out of the vineyard." He did everything He could for His vineyard, and then came seeking fruit. Instead of fruit, they cast Him out. Are we partakers in their crime? Doubtless we are ready to exclaim, God forbid. What fruit then do we give Him when He comes seeking it? If we live only for our own gain, or pleasure, or honour, we bear fruit for ourselves; we withhold the fruit which is due to God. When He sends His Son to us, saying, "They will reverence My Son," we, so far as lies in our power, "cast Him out," if we live in selfish pleasure or worldly lusts. "They cast Him out, and killed Him." Perhaps we are inclined to say, This at least we cannot do; we may refuse to give Him fruit, but we cannot kill Him Who was once crucified. Listen then to what God says to us. He tells us that if we have tasted of the heavenly gift and of the powers of the world to come, and fall away, we "crucify to ourselves the Son of God afresh." These are words of awfully solemn meaning. We do well to think over them, lest we too should be guilty of putting the Son of God to an open shame. Oh, that the contemplation of Christ crucified may humble us, and help us to bring forth good fruit and yield it up willingly to our Creator when He comes demanding it at our hands!

Saturday after the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

MANY of the people therefore, when they heard this saying, said, Of a truth this is the Prophet. Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the scripture said, That Christ cometh of the seed of David, and out of the town of Bethlehem, where David was? So there was a division among the people because of Him. And some of them would have taken Him; but no man laid hands on Him.—St. John vii. 40—44.

YEARS before the birth of our Lord it was prophesied that Bethlehem should be the honoured place of His birth. The prophecy was well known, and the Deliverer was expected from Bethlehem. His birth, however, was so hidden, so secret, that few knew the certainty of it. When He astonished the people by His words and deeds, some were inclined to believe; but they were hindered by the thought that He had been born in Galilee. They knew not that Joseph and the Blessed Virgin had gone up from Galilee on their humble journey to the lowly village of Bethlehem, and had chosen the lowliest spot in that lowly village in which to lay Him Who was the King of Israel and the Ruler of His people. Let us try to realise that wonderful scene in Bethlehem. The Desire of all nations, the Infant Christ laid in a manger; beside Him the Virgin mother and Joseph His foster-father. The world thinks little of this wonderful scene: but God thinks much. It was prophesied long years before. It was revealed to the lowly shepherds and the royal Magi. While we adore the love of God in thus fulfilling the prophecy and redeeming the world by Him Who was both God and man, let us determine to show our love for God and His Christ by obeying in all things the Will of the Father, and by following the example which the Son has left. Let us pray earnestly for courage, that we be not dismayed at the difficulties; and for light, that we may see and be guided in the right and true path; and for faith, that we may believe the word spoken by prophets and evangelists, and give ourselves up wholly to the Lord.

The Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.

BRETHREN, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.) For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body.—Philippians iii. 17—21.

OUR citizenship is in heaven. Earth is only the scene of our pilgrimage. Patriarchs, prophets, all holy men of old, have confessed that they are but strangers and pilgrims in this world. In saying this they give us to understand that they seek a home, a country. This is not our home; all that we have here we must leave. We must not think of settling down in this our pilgrimage. We must take up our cross and march forwards, with our eyes fixed on heaven our home. The way we tread, whether pleasant or dreary, should not take up too much of our attention. When it is pleasant we should think of the still brighter joys in our home above. There we shall have lasting pleasures, abiding pleasures, pleasures for evermore. When our path lies through a dreary waste, let us not be saddened or cast down. 'Tis but a short path, it will soon end, and then all that is dreary and sad will be forgotten. Our citizenship is in heaven. There is our Father and elder Brother; there are the saints—our fellow-citizens. There, all things last. On earth all is changing: what *we* have to-day belongs to *another* to-morrow. What we have in heaven is ours for ever. For with Him Who dwells in the heavens is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Let us then do as St. Paul did—the earth behind, the heavens before, we in the midst—let us make his words ours, and say, "Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, we will press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Monday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

TAKE heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.—St. Luke xxi. 34—36.

CHRIST warns us that it is our own fault if we cannot read the signs of the times. They may be known and understood as easily as the signs by which the "fig tree and all the trees" declare summer to be "now nigh." With such warning the day of Christ's second coming should not "come upon us unawares." We have received grace and mercy, we have had much light shed round us, we know what God wills, we know where we may receive strength to perform His Will; let us "take heed" therefore to ourselves. Let us beware of sinning against grace and light. Let us "watch and pray, that we may be accounted worthy to escape" the just punishment of those who sin against grace. But let us not be satisfied with merely escaping punishment. We who know God's goodness to those who trust in Him ought to strive to bring forth much fruit. Does the amount of the fruit which we bring forth correspond with the amount of grace given to us? Do we so use the grace and light that we have as to make us more self-denying? Do we hate all kinds of "surfeiting and drunkenness?" Are we less taken up with the cares of this life? When we do serve God is our intention pure, unstained with any kind of vain-glory? By asking ourselves these and similar questions we may find out whether we are using, or in danger of losing, the additional grace bestowed upon us. We may find out whether we are preparing for the second coming of the Son of man, so that it may not come on us unawares. Well for us if, when He comes, He finds us watching. We shall not only escape punishment, but "stand" without fear "before the Son of man."

Tuesday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

JESUS answered and said unto him, If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth Me not keepeth not My sayings: and the word which ye hear is not Mine, but the Father's which sent Me. These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, Whom the Father will send in My Name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.—St. John xiv. 23—26.

BLESSED are they in whom and with whom God abides. If we love the Christ and keep His words, He and the Father will love us and will make Their abode with us. If we have the Father and the Son we have the Spirit also. Do we love Christ? Do we show our love by keeping His words? If so, we are blessed with the internal presence of the Triune God. We need not travel far to seek God; we need not soar into the heavens above, or search the depths below: He is very near us; He is within us. True, we may see God in all His works, and read Him everywhere; but unless He dwells within us we cannot have "fellowship with the Father and the Son." Unless His abode is with us, the Spirit will not teach us nor bring the words of Christ to our remembrance. Let us then ask God to fill our hearts with love, and our minds with an earnest determination to keep His words. Thrice blessed are they who have fellowship with God, who know that God is dwelling within them, who hold constant communion with Him, and have so trained themselves that even in the midst of business or in society they can enter into the solitude of their hearts and dwell for a moment in holy converse with Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Who dwell, have their abode, within them. May the in-dwelling Spirit teach us to love God more and more, and to show our love by keeping His commandments; that the Father and Son may dwell richly within us, making Their abode in our hearts.

Wednesday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THE Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren. And he said unto Him, Lord, I am ready to go with Thee, both into prison, and to death. And He said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest Me.—St. Luke xxii. 31—34.

SATAN desired to sift all the apostles. Such a sifting was needful for them. It would serve to humble them, and teach them to distrust themselves and trust in God. They were all to be sifted, and one of them should be roughly handled by Satan. For him Christ had made special intercession. He knew how frail he was, how liable to fall. Doubtless Jesus had prayed for them all; but He had made special mention of St. Peter's name, and tells him so, that he might have reason to hope and not to despair when he yielded to temptation. We must all be sifted. Christ sifts, and Satan sifts. Christ's winnowing fan is even now in His hand; He will "thoroughly purge" His threshing-floor, and gather together every good grain and store it "in His garner." He sifts us by mercies and trials, by invitations and warnings, and separates by these the chaff from the wheat. Satan also sifts; but his is the sifting of temptation. Let us not think it hard or strange that God gives permission to Satan to sift us by temptation. He permits it for our good. It is in the hardships of the trenches, or the sufferings of a hand to hand encounter with the enemy, that the young recruit becomes the trained veteran. It is in a hand to hand encounter with Satan and his temptations that the young Christian soldier becomes the true warrior, skilled in the use of the weapons of our Christian warfare. Let us meet each temptation with calmness and firmness, trusting not in ourselves, but in the help which will be given us from above. Let the certainty that temptations will come make us ever watchful against them; ready to meet and repel them with the aid of the divine armour which God Himself supplies.

Thursday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

FOR I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which He was betrayed took bread: and when He had given thanks, He brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is My Body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of Me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in My Blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till He come.—1 Corinthians xi. 23—26.

IT is beyond the power of human language to express the love of Christ in the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, not only towards the whole Church, but towards individual members of that Church. We may gain some faint idea of that love by considering some of the causes why He instituted the Sacrament. He instituted it that we, through it, might be made partakers of all those good things He earned for us by His Cross and Passion. He instituted it that we might, as often as we eat the Bread and drink the Cup, "show forth His death till He come:" that we might have "spiritual food and sustenance" for our souls: that we might have "a means whereby we may receive" spiritual grace: that we might have a pledge to assure us of our oneness with Him, and of our eternal glory if we continue to abide in Him. Oh, how full of love was the Saviour when He instituted this Holy Sacrament! Do we desire to make some return for His love? What more fitting return can we make than in all humility and lowliness of spirit to bow to His Will and obey His loving command? Let us "consider the dignity" of those holy mysteries, and "examine our own consciences," (and that not lightly, and after the manner of dissemblers with God; but so) "that we may come holy and clean to such a heavenly Feast, in the marriage garment required by God in Holy Scripture, and be received as worthy partakers of that holy Table."

Friday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

PILATE, when he had called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people, said unto them, Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man: no, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him. I will therefore chastise Him, and release Him. But they cried, saying, Crucify Him, crucify Him.—St. Luke xxiii. 13—16, 21.

PILATE was convinced of the innocence of Jesus, and therefore did not wish to condemn Him. But he had not the moral courage to release Him, for he thought much more of what might conduce to his own safety and popularity than he did of truth and justice. We are guilty of a like sin if we think more of our own pleasures than of the cause and Kingdom of God. Glad of an excuse to get out of a difficulty, Pilate, when he heard of Jesus being a Galilæan, sent Him to Herod. How often we try to cast off a disagreeable duty from our shoulders to those of another man! How often from laziness, or a dislike to be troubled or weighed down with responsibility, we shrink from boldly asserting the truth or doing what we know to be right! Herod was at first glad, for he desired to see Jesus. He hoped He would exercise His miraculous powers before him. But his curiosity was not gratified. Christ will do no miracle merely to gratify curiosity. He performs His wonders to confirm the faith of those who already believe. If Herod had believed, and earnestly desired grace, no doubt Jesus would have been willing to confirm his faith. Annoyed and disappointed, Herod sends Him back again to Pilate, who makes a last attempt to release Him. But the chief priests knew that as he had yielded in part, he would yield altogether for a little more pressure; therefore they cry "Crucify Him" the more vehemently. Half measures will never help us. We cannot be popular with Christ and with His enemies. When we try to please the world, and at the same time to keep on the side of Christ, we soon find we are condemned by both.

Saturday after the Twenty-third Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

ONE of the malefactors which were hanged railed on Him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.—St. Luke xxiii. 39—43.

OH, wondrous faith of the penitent thief! He sees Jesus dying the death due to a malefactor, and yet confesses Him to be a King. He reproves the blasphemy of the malefactor who railed on Him. In doing so he confessed his own guilt, bore testimony to the innocence of Christ, and, full of faith, testifies to his belief that He is about to come into His Kingdom. One earnest prayer he offers up for himself: "Remember me." The cross led to the crown. Behold the love and mercy of Jesus. He gives, and He gives at once. "To day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Do we desire to be with Christ in Paradise? We must obey the Master's command, and take up our cross daily and follow Him. Well for us if we know Christ here in "the fellowship of His sufferings," and be made "conformable to His death," if only thus we can "know the power of His resurrection." The penitent thief does not ask to be delivered from the cross. He does not tempt Him to show His power by setting him free. Let us not fear to bear whatever God sees fit to lay upon us. When we think our cross is heavy, let us look to Christ. He knows the weight of our cross. He will not suffer us to be tempted above that we are able to bear. Let us pray to Him to remember us. Let us confess our faith in Him with boldness, and be ready to rebuke those who "rail" against Him. He will have mercy on us. He will lighten our burden by pointing us to the home beyond. He will brighten our way with hopes of Paradise, where all is purity, zeal, love, and harmony, and where blessedness and joy fill all hearts till they overflow.

The Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.

WE give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.—Colossians i. 3—5.

TRUE brotherly love is a holy flame kindled in the heart by Jesus Christ Himself. It is kindled in the heart, but its warming and life-giving power is felt by all around. True brotherly love longs to give to others even as it has received from God. It feels for a brother's sorrows, mourns over him when he falls, and tries to set him up again by sympathy or succour, or both. It does still more: it prays for him. In earnest intercessory prayer pure unselfish love is manifested. In this way we help our brother out of pure love, not for any hope of praise from men. Seldom are we thanked for intercessory prayer. It is a deed which is not written in the book of history. It is a loving act unrecorded for man, and therefore so much the purer and holier. Intercessory prayer is one of the mightiest influences which can be brought to bear in this world. When St. James writes, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much," he speaks not of prayer for one's self, but of intercessory prayer for others. So also St. Paul teaches that "prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." And of St. Paul himself it was said, "The Church would not have had a Paul if Stephen had not prayed for him." How does it stand with us in this matter? Does our brotherly love take this deepest and holiest way of expressing itself? Does our love burn as a bright flame on the altar of our hearts? Do we consider it a part, and a very holy and blessed part, of our daily work to bring the wants and requirements of our friends and neighbours before the Lord? Do we with the strong arms of faith and love let them down, as it were, before Him, overcoming every difficulty to lay them at His feet, that He may see and heal them?

Monday after the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

NOW upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the Body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen.—St. Luke xxiv. 1—6.

IF we desire to enter into the grace of Christ's glorious resurrection, we must, first of all, be conformed to His death. We must die to sin, to the world, and to the allurements and temptations of Satan. We must die to self-will, self-love, and self-indulgence. As we advance in such death to all that is opposed to the Will of God the hidden life of Christ springs up and grows within us. The powers that are vouchsafed through faith in the resurrection become ours. Power will be given to us to complete the conquest of sin, to rise superior to the attractions of the world, to conceive a hatred of all our besetting faults, and to grow in grace and the knowledge of Christ. Power will be given to us to make good resolutions, and to maintain, strengthen, and carry out those resolutions. How blessed those resolutions which are the fruits of our Lord's death and resurrection! But the very resolutions we have to make show that we are not yet free from our burden and bondage. Our Lord's resurrection is a pledge that the burden is not for ever. We have been redeemed, the price of our ransom has been paid, and soon we shall be completely free. We are now being prepared for our freedom. We are being perfected, being made fit to enjoy and use the holy liberty of the saints in light. Let the hope of what we shall be at the general resurrection bear us up in the midst of earthly sorrows and difficulties. These are but for a time, and they serve a purpose in our preparation for eternity.

Tuesday after the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

And Jesus said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things.—St. Luke xxiv. 46—48.

We have a great need of a fuller knowledge of the life of Christ. He who knows the life of Christ not merely with the understanding but with the heart, he who freely and fully enters into it, he knows Christ Himself. If we desire to know the life of Christ we must search all that has been written by Moses, and the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Him. At the same time we must pray that our understandings may be opened to understand, and our hearts quickened to believe the Scriptures. Then we shall know that Christ's life is the noblest and best of all lives. We shall long to live the life of Christ. What hinders us from doing so? The love of self, the wish to have our own way and work our own will, blinds us. Our understandings become darkened, and slow to learn and grasp spiritual things. Let us become humble learners at the feet of Jesus. Let us pray for grace to forsake sin, to conquer our self-love, and to be satisfied to follow in the way in which God leads. We do well to ask ourselves seriously and frequently, Are we learners? Is Christ our Teacher? Has He opened our understandings? If so, much will be expected of us; we must not only be learners, we must also be witnesses. Does our life bear witness to the truth? Do our words bear witness? Are we active for God, watching for opportunities to do His Will? Do we live our whole life in the power of Christ living in us? It was for this that Christ suffered and rose from the dead the third day: to win for us the right to claim His guidance and the power to live to Him here and to rise and live for ever with Him hereafter. We are endowed with this power from on high now. Let us take heed that we use it.

Wednesday after the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

IN the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.—St. John i. 1—5.

ST. JOHN takes us back to the beginning, before all creation, when the Word, the second Person of the ever blessed Trinity, was with God. The eternal existence of God is a tremendous and awful truth. It transcends our finite intelligence. We can but accept and believe that which has been revealed, and pray that the contemplation of the eternity of God may lead us to a perfect humility. Though we try to conceive of ages and ages before the world began, it will not help us to grasp the full meaning of eternity. Go back as far as we will or can, still God was the same, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. How this thought should humble us; how careful it should make us not to resist or disobey Him! How anxious we should be to commend ourselves to the loving powerful protection of Him Who is eternal! But not only is the Triune God eternal. He is the creator and preserver of all things. His power is infinite. All power is derived from Him. His power extends to all things. Any power we may have is lent to us by God. If we abuse it we try to injure God with that which is His own. Oh, how careful this thought ought to make us to conform our actions entirely to the Will of God! Life, likewise, belongs to God alone. All things exist only because they are upheld by Him. The life that is in Him from all eternity is the cause of the inward spiritual light by which we spiritually exist. Well for us if we adore the majesty of God, put ourselves under His protection, and acknowledge that all that we have or are are His, and His alone. It will lead us to humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand, and to pray that we may become all that He would have us to be.

Thursday after the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

PHILIP findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!—St. John i. 45—47.

NO sooner is St. Philip called than he wishes to bring others also to Christ. If we love God truly we shall not be satisfied to love Him alone, we shall labour that others also may know and love Him. The zeal of St. Philip would not let him rest till he finds his friend, and conveys to him the good tidings that he had "found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write." What zeal do we show in God's service? Do we seek to make known the truth to others? In how many ways we can do this. We can influence for good those who live in our home and neighbourhood. We can speak a word in kindness and love to those who are making no effort to enter in at the strait gate. We can help by our prayers, and alms, and personal efforts the great missionary cause. In these and other ways we can find our friend, our brother, or our neighbour, and bring them to Jesus. Have we the desire to do so? Let the desire be proved by our deeds. Nathanael expresses surprise that so great a good could come from so lowly a village. We often find the Christ in humble places unknown to the world, but fail to do so in the more highly exalted. How beautiful the character which Christ gives of Nathanael: "An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!" Could He, fixing His eyes on our inmost souls, say the same of us? We belong to the visible Church of Christ, but do we live up to the true spiritual privileges to which we have been called? Are we without guile? Are we truthful in our words, guileless in our thoughts, free from hypocrisy in our actions?

Friday after the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THEN answered the Jews and said unto Him, What sign shewest Thou unto us, seeing that Thou doest these things? Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt Thou rear it up in three days? But He spake of the temple of His Body. When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them.—St. John ii. 18—22.

"DESTROY this Temple." That is just what the Jews tried to do. We do well to consider deeply all that the Jews did to Christ's Body, and to remember it was done for us. As we think of His sufferings let us bear in mind that it was love and zeal for the souls of men that made Him endure all. The punishments which we deserve fell on His sacred head; but it was for this He came, for this He took man's nature, for this He lived and walked on earth. During His lifetime He had these awful sufferings constantly in view. He frequently foretold them to His disciples, and here He foretells them to the Jews in words sufficiently plain if only they wished to understand. Yes, they would do all in their power to destroy His Body; but vain would be their attempt, for He would raise it up in three days. Here again we have the glorious doctrine of the Resurrection unfolded. What effect has the contemplation of the Passion of our Lord and faith in His Resurrection on our lives and conversation? We read about them in the Word of God; we hear of them in the church; we are reminded of them at the season of the year consecrated to their commemoration, and in a lesser degree on every Friday and Sunday in the Christian year. Have they worked upon our souls and softened our hearts? Have they had the effect on us that the Saviour intended they should have on every soul of man? Oh, may the sufferings of Christ fill us with an ardent love of Him, and help us to make a firm intention to live and work for Him Who lived and suffered and died for us!

Saturday after the Twenty-fourth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

NO man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.—St. John iii. 13—15.

THROUGH the familiar type of the brazen serpent our Lord teaches Nicodemus heavenly things which as yet he could only understand in part. It is a law of God's gifts to give more than we desire. As we use them, He makes us still more capable of receiving and using. Nicodemus' faith was weak, his knowledge very imperfect. He did the best thing he could do under the circumstances. He came to Him Who could strengthen his faith and impart knowledge. Do we follow what was good in his example? When we feel our faith weak, to whom do we go for strength? When we are inclined to doubt, do we consult our friends or our favourite authors, or do we go straight to the Fountain Head, and on our knees ask for faith and strength to conquer our doubts? When we are made to feel the deficiency in our knowledge, whither do we go for a supply? Do we "go and tell Jesus" of our ignorance, and ask Him for a truer knowledge of heavenly things? Nicodemus could not grasp in all its depths of meaning Christ's teaching as to the necessity of the Son of man being lifted up. But his knowledge increased and his faith was strengthened as he heard Christ's words and observed His miracles, till in the end he had courage to throw off all disguise, and having begged the Body of Jesus, showed respect to it, took it down from the Cross, embalmed it with myrrh and aloes, and bore it to its grave. He believed on Him Who was "lifted up." Do we believe? Is our faith sufficiently strong to urge us to confess Him before men when His cause appears at a low ebb and the world's in the ascendant? If so, the promise is ours—we "shall not perish, but have eternal life."

The Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.

BEHOLD, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign: and this is His Name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that they shall no more say, The Lord liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth, which brought up, and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.—Jeremiah xxiii. 5—8.

HOW very appropriate is this portion of Scripture to the season in which we now find ourselves! It is the week before Advent. The services of our Church are anticipatory, and intended to prepare our hearts and minds for the due observance of the Advent season. The Church therefore appoints this portion of Scripture to be read as the Epistle for this day, since it foretells both the first and second Advent of Christ. It blends together in one the two Advents. The prophecy has been fulfilled in part. The first Advent is past. We look back in thankful remembrance to the time when our Lord laid aside His glory and took our nature upon Him. We look forward to a further fulfilment of the prophecy, when "The Lord our Righteousness" shall come again in His own glory, and that of His Father and of the holy angels. Can we meditate on this second coming without praying in the words of the Collect for this day, "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people?" The Christian year is now closing in upon us. To what solemn thoughts does this give rise! Have we been faithful during the past year? Have we used our influence for good? Is that little portion of human society in which we live anything the brighter or better for our existence? We cannot help asking such questions in a solemn spirit. If we can answer them favourably, if we feel that we are plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, then we may take comfort to ourselves in the assurance that we shall be "plenteously rewarded."

Monday after the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

IT shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me Whom they have pierced.—Zechariah xii. 9, 10.

ANOTHER distinct prophecy of the Messiah. The piercing of the side of the Redeemer was the culminating point of all their insulting treatment of Him by the Jewish nation. This prophecy of Zechariah was in part fulfilled at the crucifixion, when they "looked on Him" Whom the Roman soldiers "had pierced;" it will be further fulfilled at the second coming of our Lord, when "every eye shall see Him, and they which pierced Him, and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." As the Advent season draws nigh we should accustom ourselves to dwell in thought on the second coming of the Lord. How glorious the scene; and amidst all the glory "Him Whom they pierced," the most glorious of all! In that day there shall be great mourning amongst those who by their sins, their pride, their worldliness, their disobedience, "pierced" Him. Have we added to His sufferings by our sins? Will our eyes look on Him Whom we have pierced? Oh, the bitterness of the thought! To pierce Him Who loved us. If love begets love, surely the greatness of His love for us ought to beget a corresponding love for Him. Love is ever tender, and careful about hurting the feelings. Are we careful not to hurt the Saviour's loving, sympathetic, brotherly feelings by our wilful misconduct and disobedience? When He comes a second time in glory it will be for judgment. We cannot then deceive ourselves; everything will be unveiled. Then in that day the wicked shall mourn over their loss, beholding with shame and anguish Him Whom they had pierced. But the righteous shall rejoice. They believed in Him, they served Him, they will therefore stand before Him without fear, for their redemption was purchased by the Blood of Him Who, for their sake, was pierced.

Tuesday after the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

JESUS answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.—St. John iv. 13, 14.

THE Saviour forgets His weariness in His anxious desire to bring home the truth to one sinful, erring member of suffering humanity. He came to the well to find rest in His weariness, but at once sacrifices His own comfort to enrich one poor soul with that knowledge of Himself and the Father which is life everlasting. What an example to us! How often we are impatient at interruptions in times of recreation or work! We shrink from sacrificing ourselves, our comforts, or our pleasures. We are too ready with the excuse, it is too trifling a matter to disturb ourselves about. Our Lord deemed the attempt to save one soul worth all the labour and attention He could expend upon it. Do we sufficiently estimate the value of a soul? The Saviour speaks of a spiritual nourishment for the soul. Do we come to Him for that nourishment? Have we found the draughts of this world's pleasures unsatisfying? Do we find that the water of life which Christ gives satisfies all the wants of our souls? Just as the lower life of the body needs its lower food, so the higher life of the soul needs its higher food. Do we labour for the meat which alone can supply these higher needs? Do we make the attainment of this heavenly food a first object of our thoughts, knowing that our lesser needs and claims will then be the object of His care? When, by experience, we know the satisfying properties of the heavenly water, do we try to communicate the result of our experience to others, and bring them to Him Who alone can supply them with the heavenly water? Oh, for more faith to draw near to Christ, that we may ever be within reach of the heavenly water; that by continual drinking of the same our souls may be satisfied and grow strong, strengthened by the divine nourishment!

Wednesday after the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

IN the meanwhile His disciples prayed Him, saying, Master, eat. But He said unto them, I have meat to eat that ye know not of. Therefore said the disciples one to another, Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the Will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work. Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal.—St. John iv. 31—36.

THE disciples are anxious about the bodily wants of their loved Master. The Lord would teach them that there is a higher food, and by His example and words would lead them to seek it more anxiously than the bread and means of a mere earthly existence. His food was to do the Will of Him that sent Him, in enriching with knowledge and love the souls of sinful, suffering humanity. This was His strength and joy. He forgot the lesser wants of the body in the supreme things of God. The disciples could not as yet understand such deep mysteries. Do we understand them? We have the Holy Spirit's teaching and guidance. He speaks to us through the Church, through the Scriptures, through our own consciences. With such light, do we see clearly the meaning of Christ's words which was hidden from them? Do we long for the spiritual food which alone can sustain our higher life? Do we use the means for obtaining that food which He has appointed? There are many and various means of supporting the higher life. Prayer, meditation, study of the Scriptures, and more especially the Holy Communion, which is spoken of in a way that nothing else is. In it Christ gives us not only grace but also Himself, in Whom is all grace. This is the true food of our souls—food which gives strength and joy. Strength to make us labour in God's service, sowing seed for the eternal harvest; joy that a rich harvest of souls is being gathered in, and that we ourselves may be numbered among the saved.

Thursday after the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

THERE is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, He saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool. Jesus saith unto him, Rise, take up thy bed, and walk.—St. John v. 2, 3, 5—8.

BETHESDA, with its porches, and fountain, and healing waters, has ever been considered a beautiful emblem of the Church of Christ—the true Bethesda, the real "House of Mercy." "*There*," says a thoughtful writer, "is the saving Fountain which God has opened for sins and for uncleanness. *There* are the true healing waters—the sacred washing of Baptism and the tears of repentance—which are effectual for the healing of all kinds of spiritual maladies, by virtue of the saving Blood of Christ, the one great sacrifice for sin. And the angel who descended to trouble the waters, what is he but a type of the Holy Spirit, Who broodeth over the water of Baptism, and opens the fountain of tears in the penitent?" Many may be within the portals of the Church, outward members of it for many years, and yet not be healed of their diseases. It is not the fault of the Church, it is alone their own fault. Christ knows their state; He knows how long they have lived in a state of sin; with compassion unutterable He says, "Wilt thou be made whole?" Are we willing? We must will to be made whole, otherwise we abide in our sin. Unless we use the means appointed by God Himself, and in the way He desires them to be used, we shall receive nothing from Him. We must rise, rise from our couch of slothfulness, and using the powers which Christ willingly gives, walk in the way of His commandments. Thus we shall gain strength, we shall conquer the habit of sin, triumph over all difficulties, and be made whole. Let us give all the glory to God, and praise His Holy Name.

Friday after the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

VERILY, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself; so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself; and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.—St. John v. 25—29.

THE closing in of the Church's year speaks to us in trumpet tones of the near approach of the hour "when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God." In that day the trumpet of the archangel will sound, all that are in their graves shall hear and come forth, some to "the resurrection of life," some unto the "resurrection of damnation." The voice of the Son of God shall be heard on that day. How different its tones then and now! Now His voice calls in tones of mercy, entreating us not to set up our wills in defiance to His. Now His voice lovingly asks, "Are ye willing to be made whole?" Then His voice in accents of majesty will demand the submission of all. All who are in their graves must hear. All must obey. Some will obey very reluctantly. They who "have done evil" will then know the consequences of their evil deeds. They shall arise to "shame and everlasting contempt." They who "have done good" shall arise with joy. Their happiness will be then assured. They shall enter into life. Their existence will be steeped in the joys of eternity. Which lot do we choose? The choice depends on ourselves. Each day, each year as it begins, God says to us, "Choose ye whom ye will serve." If we choose to serve sin, we shall earn the wages of sin, that is, death. If we choose to serve God, He will bestow on us as a free gift "eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Let us not suffer another year to close upon us without making our choice and choosing life.

Saturday after the Twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity.—Evening.

WHAT manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace.—2 St. Peter iii. 11—14.

THE last day of another Christian year has almost closed. Another day, another week, another year has been added to our lives. The days and years are bringing us ever nearer to the second coming of the Lord in glory. When He shall come we know not. The children of this world do not desire to know. They prefer not to think about it, lest they be disturbed in their pleasures. If they continue in their sin, that day will come upon them unawares. It will come as a thief in the night. We will not suffer ourselves to be thus deceived. We look for, and desire to "hasten the coming of the day of God." We mean what we say when we use the words, "Thy Kingdom come." But lest we may deceive ourselves, we should, on this the last evening of the Church's year, examine into our lives and conduct. Let us ask ourselves very seriously whether we are "diligent to be found of Him in peace, without spot and blameless." What proofs have we that we use diligence in this matter? Do we daily take more pleasure in prayer and meditation? Do our thoughts recur to heavenly things more frequently? Do we accustom ourselves to think on holy things when awake at night, when dressing, and in the moments when we are alone during the day? Do we give more time to meditation, and prepare devoutly for it, composing both mind and body reverently? Do we prize more and make better use of all the Church's means of grace? Oh, let us resolve that the coming year shall find us more in earnest; let these resolutions be real, and let us pray to God for the graces which shall best help us to carry them out into practice.

Saint Andrew's Day.

IF thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.—Romans ix. 9—11.

OBEDIENCE—ready, willing obedience—is the lesson we learn from the Church's teaching on St. Andrew's Day. When Jesus called the two brothers as they were casting their net into the sea, they "readily obeyed." No hesitation, no excuse, no saying, "At another time, at a more convenient season." They "follow Him without delay." There is no looking behind, no lingering: "Straightway they left their nets and followed." Do we thus listen to and obey the call? The Saviour calls us now as truly as He called the apostles of old. We see not His actual bodily Presence, but we may hear His voice. He calls, when we hear the still small voice of God within us. He calls, when we read the Word of God. He calls, by His dealings in providence and grace. Are we obeying the call? Do we surrender our wills to His, and give ourselves obediently to fulfil His holy commandments? Have we renounced the fleeting, deceptive pleasures of sin, and dedicated ourselves to the service of our God? Little is known of the after history of St. Andrew. Tradition assigns Russia to him as his sphere of labour. Towards the end of a long life, spent in the service of his Saviour, he suffered martyrdom, nailed to that peculiar form of cross now familiar under the name of St. Andrew's cross. For two days he lingered. But, even in his sufferings, he did not neglect the work to which he was called by the shore of the Galilæan lake. He preached the Gospel of the Kingdom to all who came to witness his crucifixion. What do we do or suffer in the cause of Christ? Do we "confess with our mouths the Lord Jesus?" Do we deny ourselves, or take any trouble that others may hear, and believe, and call on the Name of the Lord that they may be saved?

The Conversion of Saint Paul.

PETER answered and said unto Jesus, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore? And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.—St. Matthew xix. 27—29.

THE Gospel for this day contains the Saviour's promise of reward to all who, like St. Paul, "suffer the loss of all things that they may win Christ." St. Paul had much to give up. He tells us himself that he had profited in his religion above many his equals in his own nation. He was a free-born citizen of the Roman empire. He had received a liberal education at the feet of Gamaliel, the greatest of the Jewish teachers, and was probably a member of the Sanhedrin; and yet he gives up all, and becomes as it were the "offscouring of all things" for Christ's sake. His was a good choice. He sacrificed the present and the seen for the unseen and the future, the temporal for the eternal, self for Christ. He received an hundredfold. His is the blessedness promised to those who win many souls by bringing them to the knowledge of the Saviour. How thankful should we Gentiles be for the conversion of the great Apostle of the Gentiles! He was a "chosen vessel to bear Christ's Name before the Gentiles and kings." Through his preaching God has "caused the light of the Gospel to shine throughout the world." We should use the light, otherwise it will be, for us, unavailing. It is not sufficient for the light to shine *on* people; it must shine *in* them, and be reflected from them. We must "show forth our thankfulness to God, by following the holy doctrine which St. Paul taught." Are we at all like our great apostle? Are we following his holy doctrine? Is the light shining in us, and reflected by us, to the glory of our God?

The Presentation of Christ in the Temple,

COMMONLY CALLED

The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin.

SIMEON blessed them, and said unto Mary His mother, Behold, this Child is set for the fall and rising of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also;) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. And when they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee to their own city Nazareth. And the Child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him.—St. Luke ii. 34, 35, 39, 40.

THE Bible everywhere teaches us that Jesus Christ is our great example in all things. The Collect for this day teaches us the same truth. It says, that as "the only-begotten Son was this day presented in the temple, so we may be presented unto God." But how are we to be presented unto God? This also the Collect teaches: "with pure and clean hearts;" or, as St. Paul says, we must be presented to God, "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." And in this passage he tells us by whom we are to be presented; he prays that "He," that is, Christ, "might present the Church;" and the Collect, following the teaching of Scripture, says, that "we may be presented with pure and clean hearts, by the same Thy Son Jesus Christ." This final presentation of His Church, holy, unblameable, unreprovable in God's sight, can only take place when Christ shall appear a second time in glory. Then we shall be made like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. The preparation for this state of perfection must begin here; we who have "this hope must purify ourselves, even as He is pure;" we who belong to His Church, having been presented to Him here in Baptism, must live as true members of that Church, serving God in our bodies and in our spirits which are His. Our bodies must be purified to be meet temples of the Holy Spirit, fit to be presented daily, together with our souls and spirits, a "living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God."

Saint Matthias's Day.

AND they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two Thou hast chosen; that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.—Acts i. 23—26.

VERY little is known of St. Matthias beyond the fact that he was chosen to fill the place of the traitor Judas, and thus to bring up the number of the apostles again to twelve. How awful the fate of Judas! Notwithstanding his privileges he fell. The severity of God is revealed in the words spoken of Judas, "he went to his own place." God is a God of mercy and love, but He is also a God of justice. He bestows blessings, gifts, graces without number upon us. We merit none of them. It is of His free love He bestows them. If in the midst of these, and in spite of these, we fall, the severity of God must be manifested. If, on the other hand, we continue in them, and grow in grace, the goodness of God will be manifested. Because we use the grace He gives, He will give more grace. Because we have been found faithful in a little, He will make us ruler over much. Oh, how careful we ought to be lest we abuse the gifts of God! If we sin against the light, what can we expect but condemnation? We are without excuse. The justice of God must punish. But if we use His gifts for His glory and our own growth in goodness, then we may with confidence look for the mercy of God: "Towards us goodness, if we continue in His goodness." Let us resolve then for ourselves to live in a holy fear of God's justice, and a thankful remembrance of His goodness; and earnestly pray that the Church may be preserved from false apostles, and ordered and guided by faithful and true pastors, for the sake of the great Shepherd of Souls, Jesus Christ our Lord.

The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

MOREOVER, the Lord spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the Lord thy God; ask it either in the depth, or in the height above. But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord. And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my God also? Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel. Butter and honey shall He eat, that He may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good.—Isaiah vii. 10—15.

IN these words the miracle of the Incarnation is unfolded. Everything in the prophecy is miraculous. A virgin should give birth to the only-begotten Son of God. He is to be the "Immanuel," "God with us." True, God was always with His children. He was with Abraham in Canaan; with Jacob in all his wanderings; with Moses in the wilderness. In a certain sense He is with everyone born into the world. He directs the paths of all, and pours His gifts of nature on all without distinction. But He is with the faithful in quite a different sense of the word. Immanuel is come. He is "God with us." He is like us in all things, sin only excepted. Like us in having a human mother; like us in having a birthday; like us in His experience of joy and sorrow, of weariness and rejoicing. He is our Brother. He is also our God. He brings salvation and redemption, and a deliverance far greater than the oppressed Israelites ever dreamed of. He is "with us." With us in our hours of sorrow and hours of joy, in our time of work and our time for recreation. God is with us at all times and in all places. Let us not err, even though the proud world may not understand such divine mercy. If it deems this foolishness, we know that the divine foolishness is wiser than the wisdom of men. Let us rejoice in the message of the birth of our Immanuel. It is our truest solace and sweetest comfort.

Saint Mark's Day.

ALL my state shall Tychicus declare unto you, who is a beloved brother, and a faithful minister and fellowservant in the Lord: whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that he might know your estate, and comfort your hearts; with Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother, who is one of you. Aristarchus my fellowprisoner saluteth you, and Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas, (touching whom ye received commandments: if he come unto you, receive him;) and Jesus, which is called Justus, who are of the circumcision. These only are my fellowworkers unto the Kingdom of God, which have been a comfort unto me.—Colossians iv. 7—11.

NO sooner was St. Mark converted by the great Apostle of the Circumcision, than he desired to be actively employed in the service of Christ. He seizes the first opportunity, and accompanies the apostles Paul and Barnabas as their "minister" in their first missionary journey. It must have been very trying to St. Mark to leave him who had converted him to Christ, who was his father in the faith; and doubtless his desertion of St. Paul at Perga was partly prompted by a wish to rejoin St. Peter. His desertion, though a cause of "sharp contention" between St. Paul and St. Barnabas, did not separate him for ever from the Apostle of the Gentiles. It is pleasant to read St. Paul's high commendation of him, and to know that afterwards he was a fellowworker with and a comfort unto him; yea, his dying words bear testimony to the fact that St. Mark was "profitable to him for the ministry." As we read the lives of the saints, do we pray that we, in our sphere, may imitate their virtues and be possessors of like graces? St. Paul, in writing to the faithful in Corinth, says, "Be ye followers of me." Are we striving to be followers of those who inherit the promises? Do we love the communion of saints? We should ever remember that the mystical union between us and departed saints is not severed by death. Do we aspire to be saints? There is no reason why we should not do so. We are "called to be saints." We may be so in reality by perseverance and prayer.

Saint Philip and Saint James's Day.

JAMES, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting. My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given him.—St. James i. 1—5.

ST. PHILIP earnestly desired to see the Father. St. James, in his eminently practical way, teaches us how we may become meet for the inheritance and fit to behold God. If we follow the example and obey the teaching of these apostles we shall be walking in the "way that leadeth to eternal life." It is not sufficient merely to know Christ's life and words and work. Knowledge by itself will not gain for us a livelihood in this world; we must put our knowledge into practice, and do the work to which we are appointed. We must not only know Christ, we must also do His Will. We must endure temptations. They are meant to prepare us for the vision of the Divine glory. The trial of our faith by divers temptations worketh patience. A patient endurance of trials purifies our thoughts, and compels them to rise upwards to those regions where trials will be no more. The man who endures temptation and bears sorrow well is blessed. Here he will gradually become perfected and complete. Hereafter, when his time of trial is past, he shall "receive the crown of life." How earnestly then should we pray for the wisdom which we lack, that we may know how to endure when tempted, how to make our trials blessings, and how to see in each earthly sorrow an angel of hope! Let us "ask in faith, nothing wavering." God is far more willing to give this wisdom than we are to ask it. When we receive it, let us put it to practical use. The right use of knowledge increases knowledge. As we grow in knowledge we should also grow in holiness, till we become "perfect and entire," fit to see the Father in all His glory, and to receive our eternal crown of life.

Saint Barnabas the Apostle.

THIS is My commandment, That ye love one anotner, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in My Name, He may give it you.—St. John xv. 12—14, 16.

ST. BARNABAS was endued with "singular gifts of the Holy Ghost." St. Paul enumerates many of these singular gifts in his Epistle to the Corinthians. As we read the list, and at the same time compare with it the history of St. Barnabas, we cannot help being convinced as to the gifts he possessed. He possessed faith, the word of knowledge, the word of wisdom, and, above all and beyond all, he possessed the most excellent gift of charity, or love. It is to this gift our attention is especially drawn by the Gospel for this day. "This is My commandment, that ye love one another." St. Barnabas was filled with Divine love. His love led him to part with all he had for the sake of the Church and the brethren. His love led him to offer up himself, body, soul, and spirit, as a living sacrifice unto God, and his worldly goods and substance as an offering to Christ. Are our hearts thus filled with love? Does it flame up in our lives, making us lights in the midst of darkness? This was one of the purposes for which the Saviour came, to kindle in men's souls the blaze of enthusiastic, divine love. Has this love been kindled in our souls? Does its genial heat permeate all our life, wooing forth blossoms of beauty, and bringing forth fruit, good fruit, "fruit that shall remain?" There is no reason why this flame of sacred love should not be kindled on the altar of our hearts. We have but to ask, and it shall be done; for "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it you." Pray for the gift of love; pray for grace to use it always to God's honour, and the welfare of His Church.

Saint John Baptist's Day.

THE voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed.—Isaiah xl. 3—5.

THE forerunner of the Lord was a man signally honoured of God. He was of the priestly race, and the subject of prophecy, and was himself more than a prophet. Both Isaiah and Malachi foretold the nature of his mission, and announced him as another Elijah, in the boldness with which he should speak the truth and rebuke vice, and the patience with which he should suffer for the truth's sake. For three hundred years before the birth of Jesus Christ God had withdrawn Himself from Israel. We read of no open vision to inspire, no prophet to warn His people. But now He visits them; visits to redeem. The second Elijah is sent to prepare the way for Him Who should "suddenly come to His temple." He is fitted and prepared for his work in the solitude of the wilderness. There he holds constant communion with his God, and learns the great secrets he was to reveal. He allowed nothing to draw away his thoughts from the one great work he was appointed to do. When his time of probation, the time of learning God's Will, is passed, he comes forth from his solitude and without delay sets himself to his task. Listen to his first words; they are startlingly brief: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." It is high time to cast off the works of darkness; the true Light is already shining. Then he turns to the various classes present, and enjoins charity on the selfish, and cautions the publicans against extortion, and the soldiers against discontent and violence. Thus he prepared the way of the Lord. The way of the Lord has still to be prepared. Repentance must still be preached; men must still be exhorted to put off the old man with its affections and lusts, and put on the new man; to give up their besetting sin and turn unto the Lord with all their hearts.

Saint Peter's Day.

PETER therefore was kept in prison; but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him. And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains; and the keepers before the door kept the prison. And behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison; and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly.—Acts xii. 5—7.

HOW many valuable lessons the Epistle for St. Peter's Day teaches us! We see how powerless the enemies of God are to do any injury to His chosen ones. Herod was a proud, powerful, popular king. He seeks to humble the Church, and puts forth all his strength to do so. But he miscalculates his strength. He does not take into account a reserve force which the Church was able to call to her aid at any moment. While the king relied on strong prison gates, lofty walls, and armed soldiers, the Church relies on intercessory prayer. Their confidence is not vain. The angel of God is sent forth as a "ministering spirit to minister" to this "heir of salvation." A bright light shines into the prison where St. Peter is peacefully sleeping. The angel rouses him, commands him to "gird himself and put on his sandals." There is no hurry, no confusion. What St. Peter cannot do, that the angel does for him; but in all that he can do, he must help himself. He is led in safety outside the prison walls; then the angel leaves; he no longer requires miraculous help; the rest he can do of himself. Thus God watches over His people. Thus He hears and answers the prayers offered up by His Church. Thus He brings to nought the blind rage of His enemies. For what purpose was St. Peter delivered? That he might continue to use his "many excellent gifts," and earnestly feed the flock of Christ. Oh, that all bishops and pastors would, like St. Peter, diligently preach God's Word; and that all the members of the Church would obediently follow the same, that they might receive the crown of everlasting life!

Saint James the Apostle.

NOW about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And, because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also.—Acts xii. 1—3.

ST. JAMES is the only apostle whose death is recorded in the Holy Scriptures. This is the more remarkable and interesting because his death was the fulfilment of the prophecy of our Lord mentioned in the Gospel for the day. He drank of the cup his Master drank of; he was baptized with the baptism of suffering with which He had been baptized. St. James' ambition was to sit on the right hand of Jesus in His Kingdom; he obtained it, but not as he supposed. His heavenly Father advanced him to a seat of honour, even the honour of being the first martyred of the little band of the apostles. The apostle had readily obeyed the call of the Saviour; he had followed him in his life, and now he follows Him in his death. The Collect teaches us the lesson which we Christians in our altered circumstances learn from the example of St. James. We should "forsake all worldly and carnal affections, and be ever more ready to follow God's holy commandments." Christ has called us; He calls us frequently. Do we listen to His call, and follow? If so, we must forsake worldly affections; forsake all that would keep us from Him; forsake our pride, our ambition, and learn true humility in the school of Christ. Oh, that we would resolve to forsake everything that forms a barrier between us and our God, and determine, with the Spirit's help, to walk in the way of His holy commandments! O Lord Jesu Christ, Who art the King of the apostles, give us grace and light to profit by their example, that without delay we may yield obedience to Thy call and evermore follow Thy holy commandments. We confess that we are powerless, and can do no good thing in our own strength; help us therefore, and we shall forsake all carnal affections; our spirit is willing but our flesh is weak. Fill us with Thy Spirit, that we may give ourselves up entirely to God.

Saint Bartholomew the Apostle.

AND by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.) Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them. There came also a multitude out of the cities round about unto Jerusalem, bringing sick folks, and them which were vexed with unclean spirits: and they were healed every one.—Acts v. 12, 14—16.

ST. BARTHOLOMEW was a native of Cana in Galilee. The name signifies son of Tolmai, and therefore is only a name of parentage, just as Simon Peter was called Bar-jona, or the son of Jona. His own name never occurs in the three first Gospels, and it is generally supposed that he is identical with Nathanael, to whom a foremost place is assigned amongst the apostles mentioned in the last chapter of St. John's Gospel. Surely it is good for us to have our thoughts drawn upwards by contemplating those who "through faith and patience inherit the promises." It is good for us to have our eyes drawn away from the petty things of this world and fixed on that world above us, the abode of rational and moral beings, the sphere of angels, saints, and seraphims. The Epistle to the Hebrews bids us to be "followers" of those blessed ones who inherit the promises. The Epistle to the Ephesians considers departed saints as belonging to the Church; those in heaven and those on earth all forming one family. Let us then lift up our hearts and thoughts, first by rendering praise and hearty thanks to God for the grace by which His saints were enabled to endure unto the end; secondly, by seeking to imitate their virtues, and to work on here below with the same faith and patience till we join them in the realms above; and also by consciously uniting our praises with those of the "angels and archangels, and all the company of heaven," lauding and magnifying the glorious Name of our thrice holy Father and God.

Saint Matthew the Apostle.

IF our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.—2 Corinthians iv. 3—6.

DARK indeed was the soul of Levi when Jesus passed by. The "god of this world" had blinded his mind. But God, Who commanded on the first day light to shine out of the natural darkness, shone into his heart, and straightway light began to dawn on the spiritual darkness of his soul. Has the "god of this world" blinded wholly or partly our minds? Is he even now striving to hide or shut out altogether "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ?" If so, our only safety is in suffering the command "Let there be light" to have its full force. Let us not place, or suffer to be placed, any hindrance in the way of the light. The collect for this day will help and guide us in this matter. "Covetous desires, inordinate love of riches," are some of the means whereby the "god of this world" blinds men's hearts. If we would make a road for the light to shine into our hearts we must forsake these. Our hearts belong to God. He created them at the first, He redeemed them; He claims them day by day, saying, "My son, give me thy heart." Now if we yield our hearts to the enemy, to the god of this world, darkness must reign; for Satan is the prince of darkness. But when we throw off allegiance to him, and shake off the chains which bind us to him, then our hearts return to their rightful owner, and He, being the "light of the world," will cause light to shine into them. As the natural darkness yielded to the light of creation, so the spiritual darkness must yield to the light of redemption. Well for us if, when the Master calls, we rise with St. Matthew and follow Jesus in the way.

Saint Michael and All Angels.

THERE was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon fought and his angels; and prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the devil and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world; he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ.—Revelation xii. 7—10.

THE life of the angels is described in Holy Scripture as a life of exalted praise and of active service. Daily we utter the words which Christ Himself taught His disciples: "Thy Will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." As we utter these words do we grasp all their depth of meaning? Do we consciously place before us as our ideal the angel life, and do we strive to reach our ideal? What is it then we pray for, when we ask God for help to do His Will here, even as the angels do it in heaven? First, then, their life is a life of praise and adoration. They praise God for what He is. They praise Him for His glorious attributes. They praise Him for His holiness, His power, His might, His wisdom, His honour. Do we ceaselessly praise God for these attributes? Does the desire to praise Him grow deeper in our hearts? Then, again, the angels are engaged in active service. Throughout the Bible, angels are seen ministering to God's saints. Angelic beings do not now appear to our eyes, but we doubt not that they are as really present to us as to the patriarchs and prophets in olden times. Their mission is a mission of love. They are ever striving to bring good out of evil. They succour the tempted. They strengthen the weak and weary. They manifest God's love to us. They urge us to grasp the hand of God held out to us, and accept the salvation offered to us. Thus they are doing God's Will. There is no reason why every member of Christ's Church should not now go and do likewise, that hereafter they may become companions of the angels in heaven.

Saint Luke the Evangelist.

WATCH thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry. For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.—2 Timothy iv. 5—8.

THE work of an evangelist is to win souls to Christ. This we can all do, this we are bound to do, no matter what our age, or education, or station in life may be. If we "love His appearing" we shall not only prepare ourselves that we may receive "the crown of righteousness" in that day, but our love will prompt us to work with Him if by any means we may win souls. Happy, yea, blessed are we if we work with Him. There are many ways in which we can win souls to Christ. There is no necessity to leave the station in life in which it has pleased God to call us in order to do so. By our example, by showing what good influence the Gospel has had upon our lives, by obeying those set over us by God's authority, we may win souls. By speaking in gentle and loving tones to our companions, or fellow-labourers, telling them what real blessedness results from "fighting a good fight, and keeping the faith," and reminding them of the crown laid up for all who love and serve the Lord, we may win souls. By ministering to the bodily wants of those who are in deep distress, in weakness, or sickness, we may image forth to them the power of the Great Physician to heal their spiritual sicknesses, and so win souls. But let us remember, that if we would influence others we ourselves must be first influenced by the love of the Saviour. The wholesome medicines of the doctrine delivered by St. Luke must have healed the diseases of our own souls. If, then, we love His appearing, let us prepare ourselves that we may be "ready when the time of our departure is at hand;" and let us diligently labour in our own sphere for the salvation of those upon whom our influence may be brought to bear.

Saint Simon and Saint Jude, Apostles.

JUDE, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called: Mercy unto you, and peace, and love, be multiplied. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.—St. Jude 1—3.

ST. JUDE speaks of himself as the servant of Jesus Christ. We cannot help seeing in this expression a memory of the Saviour's word, "The servant is not greater than his Lord." Doubtless before this he had experience of the truth of his Master's words, "If they persecute Me they will also persecute you." His Epistle gives ample proof that he did not shrink from suffering. He knew, for Christ foretold it, that opposition to the ways, the habits, the pursuits of the world would arouse its enmity. Still he denounces the evil which was in the world in no measured terms, and warns those who continue in sin that their reward is sure, their punishment prepared. St. Jude is not one of those weak Christians who shrink from dwelling on the justice and wrath of God. He delights indeed in urging his hearers to look for the mercy of the Lord Jesus, and to think of the love of God the Father in sanctifying and preserving us; but he warns them that there is a sterner side to His character. If men will not repent they may see their own doom in that of the "angels who kept not their first estate," and of "Sodom and Gomorrha suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Vengeance belongeth unto Him, He will recompense. Oh, that the careless, the unconcerned, and the openly profligate would see the evil of their ways, and repent, and turn to the Lord! And may God give strength to those who are His servants to "contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints;" to warn those who are running after error; and by their holy lives, and the purity of their conversation, to give a rebuke, if even a silent one, to the mockers, and those "who walk after their own ungodly lusts."

All Saints' Day.

AFTER this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God.—Revelation vii. 9—11.

GOD has knit together His elect "in one communion and fellowship in the mystical body of His Son Christ our Lord." No force of death or hell is sufficiently strong to break asunder the bond by which they are united. Neither time, nor space, nor variety of condition can do it. We are one in communion and fellowship with the faithful who worship at the antipodes. We are one in communion and fellowship with those holy ones who in the centuries gone by approached the one God through the one Mediator Jesus Christ. How this thought cheers the mourner who painfully feels the void that death has made in his heart and home! The loved ones are not lost; the bond which knit us to them has not been broken. When we draw near to the mercy seat to offer our praise and thanksgiving to our God we may feel that those we loved are very near us; for they, in their brighter home beyond, are also pressing round the throne, and standing "before the Lamb," lifting up their voice in hymns of praise and acts of adoration, ascribing "blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving unto our God for ever and ever." Do we not also feel ourselves sensibly drawn towards them, and united more firmly to them, by looking forward to enjoying the same happiness with them in a little while? Let us lift up our eyes, and force our thoughts to rise as we breathe forth the holy aspiration from our hearts, "that we may come to those unspeakable joys" which the saints are already rejoicing in. Do we desire these unspeakable joys? If so, there is a "crown of righteousness laid up" for us too, for it is prepared for all who love Christ's appearing.

DAILY FAMILY PRAYER
FOR ONE WEEK.

Sunday Evening.

The portion of Scripture appointed for the day, together with the devotional reading, having been read, the Master of the house shall say,

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The General Confession (to be said by all).

ALMIGHTY God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Maker of all things, Judge of all men; We acknowledge and bewail our manifold sins and wickedness, Which we, from time to time, most grievously have committed, By thought, word, and deed, Against Thy Divine Majesty, Provoking most justly Thy wrath and indignation against us. We do earnestly repent, And are heartily sorry for these our misdoings; The remembrance of them is grievous unto us; The burden of them is intolerable. Have mercy upon us, Have mercy upon us, most merciful Father; For Thy Son our Lord Jesus Christ's sake, Forgive us all that is past; and grant that we may ever hereafter serve and please Thee in newness of life, To the honour and glory of Thy Name; Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

For a Blessing on Public Worship.

ALMIGHTY Father, accept the praises and offerings, and answer the prayers which have been offered to Thee this day by Thy Holy Church. Bless the word spoken, and the administration of Thy sacraments. We thank Thee for the privileges and blessings of Thy holy day, and the means of grace provided by the Church. We thank Thee for all that we have heard and learnt today. Let us not be forgetful hearers, but doers of Thy Word. Let Thy Holy Spirit dwell richly in our hearts,

that the seed sown this day may grow, and increase, and bear much fruit to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

(Here may be introduced the Collect for the Day, and Special Prayers.)

Memorial of the Resurrection.

O GOD, Who for our redemption didst give Thine only-begotten Son to the death of the Cross, and by His glorious resurrection hast delivered us from the power of our enemy; Grant us so to die daily from sin, that we may evermore live with Him in the joy of His resurrection; through the same Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Then shall follow the Lord's Prayer, to be said by all with an audible voice.

OUR Father, which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy Will be done in earth, As it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, As we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation; But deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

O Lord, save Thy servants;
That put their trust in Thee.
Send unto them help from above.
And evermore mightily defend them.
Help us, O God our Saviour.
And for the glory of Thy Name deliver us; be merciful to us sinners, for Thy Name's sake.

Commendation.

LORD, we commend ourselves and all belonging to us to Thee. Defend us during the dark hours of the night. Give us needful rest and sleep, that we may rise refreshed, ready and willing to serve Thee on the morrow, and to do all our work as in Thy Presence; for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

THE Lord bless us, and keep us; the Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us, and give us peace, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

Monday Evening.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The General Confession (*see Sunday Evening, p.* 406).

Or this.

O ALMIGHTY Lord, and everlasting Father, we confess that we have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed, and that we are unworthy through our many faults to offer to Thee any sacrifice; yet, Lord, most holy, we trust in Thy merciful lovingkindness. Pardon all our misdeeds, forgive all our sins, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away our offences; for Thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving.

WE bless and praise Thy holy Name, O Lord our God, for all Thy mercies known and unknown which Thou hast bestowed on us Thy unworthy servants. Many and undeserved have been Thy favours and blessings. O may we feel Thy goodness, and praise and bless Thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but more especially for our redemption by the precious Blood of Thy dear Son, and our sanctification by Thy Holy Spirit; for the means of grace here, and the hope of glory hereafter in heaven. Teach us to show forth our thankfulness not only with our lips but in our lives, living to the glory of Thy Name; through Jesus Christ our Mediator and Advocate. *Amen.*

Intercession.

O MERCIFUL God, bless Thy holy Church throughout all the world; bless especially that portion of it which Thou hast planted in this land. May each

member be more and more conformed to the perfect pattern of Thy dear Son. Look in mercy on the heathen that know not Thee. Send more labourers into the spiritual harvest field, that all who sit in darkness may be instructed into the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that the true Light may shine, and the Sun of Righteousness arise upon them. Have mercy on all our relations, and friends, and neighbours; bless them with all spiritual blessings. For ourselves assembled before Thee we ask an abundant outpouring of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may walk worthy of our Christian calling, to the glory of Thy Name. *Amen.*

(Here may be introduced the Collect, and Special Prayers.)

Our Father, &c.

O Lord, shew Thy mercy upon us.
And grant us Thy salvation.
O Lord, save the Queen.
And mercifully hear us when we call upon Thee.
Endue Thy Ministers with righteousness.
And make Thy chosen people joyful.
O Lord, save Thy people.
And bless Thine inheritance.

Commendation.

LORD, we commend ourselves and all we have to Thee. Watch over us, and protect us. Grant us refreshing sleep, that we may arise to-morrow to serve Thee in the ordinary duties of our daily lives, and praise Thee in word and work; for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

MAY the blessing of God Almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, be amongst us and remain with us always. *Amen.*

Tuesday Evening.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The General Confession (*see Sunday Evening, p.* 406).

Or this.

WE confess, Almighty God, Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed, through our own fault, our own most grievous fault. Thou alone knowest the secrets of our hearts, and Thou alone hast power to forgive sins. Blot out all our iniquities. Remember them not any more against us. Cast us not away from Thy Presence. Create and make in us new and contrite hearts, that we may henceforth live in Thy fear, and to Thy glory; through Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

A General Thanksgiving (*see Monday Evening, p.* 408).

Or this.

WE thank Thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast been pleased to bring us to the close of another day. We thank Thee for all the blessings of the day, but especially do we thank Thee for the spiritual blessings we enjoy in this favoured land; praying Thee that we may ever set our affections more and more on things above, and seek Thy Kingdom and its righteousness. Accept these our thanksgivings, and teach us always to preserve a thankful spirit; for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Collect for Aid against Perils.

LIGHTEN our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of Thy only Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

(Here may be introduced the Collect, and Special Prayers.)

Intercession.

BE pleased, O Lord, to hear our humble intercessions on behalf of Thy holy Church universal, especially for that portion of it in which we live. Bless the Queen, and all in authority. We pray for the bishops, priests, and deacons; that Thou wouldest send upon them the healthful spirit of Thy grace. Prosper the work of the Church in this parish; and give us grace so to pass through things temporal that finally we lose not the things eternal. *Amen.*

Our Father, &c.

O Lord, let our prayer be set forth in Thy sight as the incense.

And the lifting up of our hands as an evening sacrifice.

So teach us to number our days.

That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Shew us the light of Thy countenance.

And we shall be whole.

Benedictory Prayer.

THE blessing of God Almighty, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be with us and all whom we should remember, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

Wednesday Evening.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The General Confession (*see Sunday Evening, p.* 406).

Or this.

O ALMIGHTY Father, Lord of heaven and earth, we have sinned against Thee in thought, word, and deed, through our own fault, our most grievous fault. Have mercy upon us, O Lord; have mercy upon us, after Thy great goodness; according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away our offences. Wash us throughly from our wickedness, and cleanse us from our sins; for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving.

BE pleased, O our heavenly Father, to accept this our evening sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving for Thy goodness and lovingkindness in leading us in safety through the length of the day, and in bringing us again to the beginning of another night. We thank Thee for the many daily blessings with which Thou blessest us, and for the hope Thou hast given us of eternal happiness with Thee in Thy everlasting Kingdom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

(*Here may be introduced the Collect, and Special Prayers.*)

ALMIGHTY God, with Whom do live the spirits of them that depart hence in the Lord; We humbly beseech Thee that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy Kingdom; that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Intercession.

ALMIGHTY and eternal God, let Thy special blessing, we pray Thee, abide on Thy holy Church universal, and especially on that portion of it in which we live. Bless the Queen, and all in authority; the bishops, priests, and deacons: that we may lead peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty. Bless our relations, friends, and neighbours. Succour the poor and needy. Have mercy on the sick and afflicted, and spare all those who call upon Thee. For ourselves here present, we beseech Thee that Thou wouldest enlighten our minds more and more, subjugate our wills, and purify our hearts; that we may become daily more fitted for our eternal inheritance, when we shall be numbered with Thy saints in glory everlasting; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Our Father, &c.

We will lay us down in peace and take our rest:
For it is Thou, Lord, only that makest us dwell in safety.

Commendation.

LORD, we commend ourselves and all belonging to us into Thy care and keeping this night. Let Thy holy Presence dwell in this our home, to preserve it in peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

The grace of our Lord, &c.

Thursday Evening.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

Thanksgiving.

LORD, we thank Thee for Thy holy Word; we bless and praise Thee for all Thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men; and as our evening sacrifice we present unto Thee ourselves, our souls and bodies, praying Thee to have mercy upon us, to cleanse us from every stain of sin, and accept our reasonable service; for Thy dear Son's sake, Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Evening Prayer.

O MERCIFUL God, Who of Thine abundant goodness towards us hast made the day to labour in, and ordained the night wherein to take our rest; Grant to us such rest of body that we may continually have a waking spirit to watch for the time when our Lord shall appear to deliver us from this mortal life. Suffer not vain thoughts to trouble us, nor let our ghostly enemies have power over us; but let our minds be set wholly on Thy Presence, to love, and to fear, and to rest in Thee alone; that, being refreshed with a moderate and quiet sleep, we may rise up again with cheerful strength and gladness, to serve Thee in all good works; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Intercession.

O FATHER of mercies, and God of all consolation, look down in mercy upon this parish; and grant that all who profess and call themselves Christians may depart from iniquity and adorn the doctrine of Christ their Saviour in all things. Have mercy on all

who are in error; convert the sinful; bless those who love and serve Thee; uphold the weak, and strengthen their faith. Spare those who wilfully disobey the truth, and show them their danger. Bless all those who aid in the ministering work of our Church; especially bless our appointed pastor, and grant that he may be endued with all gifts necessary for his work and ministry. Bless also the schools, that those who teach may themselves be taught of Thee, and those who learn may be made wise unto salvation. Give large and liberal hearts to those who are rich, that they may be glad to distribute for the good of Thy Church and the glory of Thy Name; and make the poor patient, and fill them with spiritual blessings. And grant that we may all be knit together in Christian love and charity; for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

(Here may be introduced the Collect, and Special Prayers.)

Our Father, &c.

Thy mercy, O Lord, reacheth unto the heavens:
And Thy faithfulness unto the clouds.
How excellent is Thy lovingkindness, O God:
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Thy wings.
Lord, be merciful to us sinners:
And save us for Thy mercy's sake.

Benedictory Prayer.

MAY our Lord of His mercy grant unto us, with all His faithful servants, rest and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Friday Evening.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The General Confession (*see Sunday Evening, p.* 406).

Or this.

O MERCIFUL God, we come to Thee to ask for pardon for our many sins. As we look back on our past lives we see much to confess, much to mourn over. We confess that we have frequently neglected our duties, spoken unkind and impatient words, forgotten or broken our vows or promises. Lord, blot out all our transgressions; forgive us all our negligences and offences; and receive us graciously; for Jesus Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Intercession.

O MERCIFUL God, Who hast made all men, and hatest nothing that Thou hast made, nor wouldest the death of a sinner, but rather that he should be converted and live; Have mercy upon all Jews, Turks, Infidels, and Hereticks, and take from them all ignorance, hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word; and so fetch them home, blessed Lord, to Thy flock, that they may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites, and be made one fold under one Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord, Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Spirit, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

Memorial of the Passion.

O LORD Jesu Christ, Who didst willingly give Thyself to the death upon the cross for us men and our salvation, save us for Thy mercy's sake. By Thine agony and bloody sweat; by Thy Cross and Passion; by Thy Death and Burial, good Lord, deliver us. Behold the sorrows of our hearts; forgive us all our sin. We acknowledge that by our grievous sin we have rendered ourselves unworthy of Thy mercy and goodness. Preserve us from crucifying Thee afresh, and opening Thy wounds anew. Speak peace to our souls, and let Thy blood purge away all our guilt; for Thine own sake, most loving Saviour. *Amen.*

Commendation.

LORD, we commend ourselves and all belonging to us into Thy hands. Bless us, and all our friends, and relatives, and neighbours. Take us all under Thy fatherly care and protection this night. Be with us when lying down and rising up. Defend us with Thy heavenly grace, that we may continue Thine for ever, and daily increase in Thy Holy Spirit more and more, until we come unto Thy everlasting kingdom. *Amen.*

Our Father, &c.

O Lord, save Thy servants:
Who put their trust in Thee.
Turn Thou us, O God our Saviour.
And let Thine anger cease from us.
O God, make speed to save us.
O Lord, make haste to help us.

Commendation.

SAVIOUR of the world, save and deliver us, by Thy Cross and Passion; by Thy precious Death and Burial; we humbly beseech Thee. *Amen.*

MAY grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour, and from the Holy Ghost the Comforter, be with us and all whom we should remember, this night and for evermore. *Amen.*

Saturday Evening.

Let us pray.

Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.

The General Confession (*see Sunday Evening, p.* 406).

Or this.

LORD, we confess our many sins and shortcomings, negligences and ignorances. When we look on the past, we feel that our transgressions have been many. We have sinned against light and knowledge, yea, and against the workings of Thy Spirit in our hearts. Give us true contrition and a godly sorrow. Make us feel our sins. May the remembrance of them be grievous to us. Pardon our iniquities, and forgive us all; for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

Collect for Peace.

O GOD, from Whom all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works do proceed; Give unto Thy servants that peace which the world cannot give; that both our hearts may be set to obey Thy commandments, and also that by Thee we being defended from the fear of our enemies may pass our time in rest and quietness; through the merits of Jesus Christ our Saviour. *Amen.*

Thanksgiving.

ALMIGHTY God, we approach Thee to thank Thee for Thy fatherly care over us, and for having brought us in peace and safety to the close of another day and another week. Day by day Thou hast watched over us and protected us; we thank Thee, and bless Thy holy Name. We thank Thee also for the spiritual

privileges and means of grace which are ours as members of the Church of Christ. Lord, we acknowledge we have not been sufficiently grateful in the past. Make us more grateful for all Thy mercies, and more deserving of them; for Christ's sake. *Amen.*

(Here may be introduced the Collect, and Special Prayers.)

Intercession.

O GOD, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech Thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that Thou wouldest be pleased to make Thy ways known unto them, Thy saving health unto all nations. More especially, we pray for the good estate of the Catholick Church; that it may be so guided and governed by Thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to Thy fatherly goodness all those, who are any ways afflicted, or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; [*especially* ——— *for whom in particular we desire to offer our prayers;*] that it may please Thee to comfort and relieve them, according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ His sake. *Amen.*

Our Father, &c.

The grace of our Lord, &c.

PRAYERS

FOR

SPECIAL OCCASIONS.

Advent.

I.

O LORD God, Father Almighty, purify, we beseech Thee, the secrets of our hearts, and mercifully wash out all the stains of sin; and grant, O Lord, that, cleansed by the blessing of Thy love, we may without fear wait for the second coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

II.

O ETERNAL God and Father, the near approach of the festival of the Incarnation reminds us of Thy great love in sending Thy dearly beloved Son in great humility to save a perishing world. Fill our hearts with gratitude, and help us to show forth our gratitude by our words and works, in public and in private. Teach us to watch for His second coming in great glory, that when He appears we may be found ready, with loins girded and lamps burning, to enter with Him into the marriage feast, and receive the blessing promised to all those who love their Lord's appearing; through the same Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Christmas.

I.

O GOD, glory to Thy Name for this blessed day [*or* season]. Make it ever a day [*or* season] of reverent joy and holy gladness of heart; and so bring home to us the greatness of our spiritual mercies in Christ, that we may be filled with love and praise, and evermore give thanks unto Thee in Thy holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

II.

O GOD, Who makest us glad with the yearly remembrance of the Birth of Thy only Son Jesus Christ; Grant that, as we joyfully receive Him for our Redeemer, so we may with sure confidence behold Him when He shall come to be our Judge; Who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. *Amen.*

New Year's Eve.

O LORD our God, open our eyes that we may see and know what Thou out of pure love and mercy hast done for us in the year now closing. Extinguish in us all pride and self-seeking. Make it clear to us how Thou hast been the beginning and the end of all our actions, and that Thou alone hast given us the power and will to carry out anything that may be well-pleasing to Thee. We confess that we have sinned against Thee often and grievously in the past year. Give us such a sense of our sinfulness as may produce true contrition. Help us to shake off the burden of sin from our consciences, laying it beneath the Cross of Thy dear Son. Speak the word of forgiveness, that we take not any burden with us into the New Year. Help us to lay aside every weight, to forget the things which are behind, and to press forward for the prize of our high calling in Christ Jesus our Lord. *Amen.*

New Year's Day.

ALMIGHTY Father, Thou hast suffered Thy Son's Name to be written indelibly on the entrance of the New Year. May that Name be written in our hearts. May it give light to our paths, depth of meaning to our lives, and reality to all our thoughts and desires. We praise Thee and give Thee thanks for making us Thy children. We implore Thee to help and protect and guide us during the coming year. Let not the impressions made on us this day quickly fade away. Be with us throughout this year. Be with us in adversity, and comfort us with Thy free Spirit. Be with us in

prosperity, and suffer us not to be high-minded, but fear. Be with us in all our temptations, and make a way of escape for us; through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

Lent.

O ALMIGHTY God, give us grace rightly to observe this season of Lent. May we have the mastery over every sinful appetite or desire. Give us strength to withstand the temptations of our spiritual enemies. Purify our hearts and minds, that we may follow the steps of Thy Son Jesus Christ. Forgive us all our sins; deliver us from all our sorrows; and so make haste to help us in this world, that we may live with Thee in the world to come; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

Holy Week.

I.

O GOD, Whose nature and property is ever to have mercy and to forgive, receive our humble petitions; and though we be tied and bound with the chain of our sins, yet let the pitifulness of Thy great mercy loose us; for the honour of Jesus Christ, our Mediator and Advocate. *Amen.*

II.

O HEAVENLY Father, grant us grace to observe in the spirit of holiness and piety, of humility and adoration, this holy week, wherein we renew the memory of our Saviour's sufferings and death. Help us to deny ourselves, and to take up our cross and follow Him. May His sufferings make clear to us the awful sinfulness of sin, and excite in us an earnest desire to die unto sin, and crucify the flesh with all its affections and lusts. Grant to us, and to all who keep His blessed Passion in devout remembrance, a holy and godly life in this present world, and eternal glory in the world to come; through the same our Saviour, Thy Son Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

Good Friday.

O LORD Jesu Christ, Who wast obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, and hast destroyed the power of death; Deliver us by Thy holy and precious Blood. Deliver us from the curse which our sins have deserved. Deliver us from all evils past, present, and to come. Mortify in us all evil affections. Fill us with Thy grace and with every virtue; that, meditating on Thy sufferings and on our sins, we may be filled with contrition, and rise with Thee on the Easter Morn to newness of life; through Thine infinite mercy, O Lord Jesu, our Saviour and our God. *Amen.*

Easter-Day.

O MOST glorious Saviour, Who by Thy divine power didst raise Thyself from death to life; Raise us, we pray Thee, from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. Enable us to believe Thy doctrines and obey Thy commandments, that, after a holy and religious life spent in Thy service, we may at the last day be quickened in our mortal bodies, and pass from death to life, from the darkness of the grave to the light of heaven. *Amen.*

The Ascension-Day.

O LORD Jesu Christ, Who after Thy resurrection didst ascend gloriously into the heavens; Raise our hearts above all that is worldly and sinful, that our conversation may be in heaven; and fulfil Thy promise that Thy spiritual Presence may ever be with us on earth. *Amen.*

Whit-Sunday.

O HOLY Ghost, the Comforter, inspire our souls, and lighten them with celestial fire. Dwell in our hearts; sanctify, purify, cleanse them from every stain of sin. Guide us into all truth; and make our bodies temples of the living God, and meet dwellings for Thy holy Presence; Who with the Father and Son livest and reignest one God for evermore. *Amen.*

Before Holy Communion.

ALMIGHTY Father, give us, we beseech Thee, such grace that we may duly examine our hearts and secret thoughts, and so prepare ourselves to join in the prayers and praises of Thy Church. Bless especially to us the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ, that we may receive in it that which we seek, even the Saviour Himself, and forgiveness of sins in and through Him. Increase in us the graces of Thy Holy Spirit, that we may be guided into all truth, and live lives of holiness; through the same Thy Son Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

After Holy Communion.

O MOST merciful Father, pardon, we humbly beseech Thee, all coldness or carelessness in our approach to Thee and Thy holy Table this day. We thank Thee for permitting us to partake of the Holy Sacrament of the Body and Blood of Thy dear Son. Increase our thankfulness. Unite us more closely to our Saviour, that we may evermore abide in Him and He in us, that through the in-dwelling of Christ in us we may receive all those graces which are necessary for our souls; through the same Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For a sick Person.

O LORD, look down from heaven, behold, visit, and relieve Thy *servant*, for whom our prayers are desired. Look upon *him* with the eyes of Thy mercy; restore *him*, if it be Thy good pleasure, to *his* former health; sanctify this Thy fatherly correction to *him*; give *him* comfort and sure confidence in Thee; defend *him* from the assaults and fear of the enemy, and keep *him* in perpetual peace and safety; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

After recovery from Sickness.

O ALMIGHTY and merciful God, the author and giver of life and health, and all good things; We most humbly bless Thee that Thou hast been pleased to deliver from *his* bodily sickness Thy *servant*, who

now *desireth* to return thanks unto Thee for Thy great mercies vouchsafed to *him*. Impress *his heart* with a sense of Thy goodness; and grant *him* grace to devote the residue of *his life* to Thy service, walking before Thee in holiness and righteousness all *his* days; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

For the Missions of the Church.

O MOST Blessed Saviour, Who of Thy great goodness hast given to us Gentiles the light of Thy Gospel, and the knowledge of Thee, and hast appointed a succession of men to preach Thy Word and administer Thy Sacraments; Inspire, we pray Thee, the Bishops and Pastors of Thy Church with Thy Holy Spirit; increase the number of faithful labourers, and fill them with zeal for Thy glory, and for the salvation of souls. Vouchsafe Thine aid to those who labour afar off among the heathen and unconverted. Grant to all Thy people, and especially to missionary societies, the grace of grateful, liberal, wise, and loving hearts; that, aiding in this holy work according to Thy Will, our prayers and alms may come up for a memorial before Thee, and be accepted in Thy sight, for the propagation of Thy Gospel, and the furtherance of Thy kingdom; through Thy merits, and Thine only mediation, Who with the Father and the Holy Ghost livest and reignest one God, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

In time of War.

O ALMIGHTY God, keep, we beseech Thee, our soldiers and sailors who have now gone forth to war from all the manifold temptations to which, in the fulfilment of their appointed duties, they may be exposed; that so, being armed with Thy defence, and preserved by Thy grace from all cruelty, and wrath, and wrong, they may glorify Thee, Who art the only giver of all victory; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.*

After death of Archbishop or Bishop.

O GOD, our refuge and strength, Who art the Author of all godliness, be ready, we beseech Thee, to hear the devout prayers of Thy Church; and as Thou didst give to Thy holy Apostles many excellent gifts, and commandedst them earnestly to feed Thy flock, so grant to this diocese a bishop and pastor who shall diligently preach Thy Word, and duly administer the godly discipline thereof. May he be earnest to reprove, rebuke, exhort with patience and longsuffering. May he be so merciful that he be not too remiss, and so minister discipline that he forget not mercy. May he be a wholesome example in word, in faith, in purity, so that, as a wise and faithful servant, giving to Thy family their portion in due season, he may at the latter day receive the crown of righteousness laid up by the Lord the righteous Judge, Who liveth and reigneth one God, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, world without end. *Amen.*

After removal of Incumbent from Parish.

O LORD Jesu Christ, the Chief Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, Be pleased to bestow on this parish a faithful under-shepherd who may duly administer Thy Word and Sacraments in place of him whom Thou hast seen fit lately to remove. Increase in him the gifts of the Holy Spirit, that he may labour diligently for Thee to the saving of those committed to his care. Let Thy Presence ever be with him, that he may constantly speak the truth and boldly rebuke vice, and be an example of holiness to the flock. Bless all useful works undertaken in this parish for the promotion of Thy glory. Stir up all hearts to further them according to their power, and bring to nought the counsels of those who work against Thee and Thy holy Church; for Thine own great Name's sake. *Amen.*

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